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SEPTEMBER 1909

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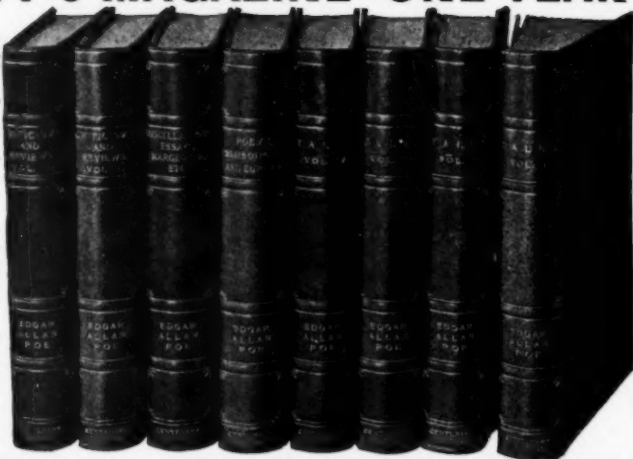
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A BRIDE FOR CASEY

BY

ELLA MIDDLETON TYBOUT

Author of "The Smuggler," "Pokerstown People," etc.

I.

WHEN Casey told us he was going to be married we remained a moment in expressive silence, then Randy Fergusson spoke. Randy often spoke first and apologized afterwards.

"Who is the blithering idiot?"

Casey sat upright and replied with dignity in spite of the lint and feathers ornamenting his hair, which was also upright.

"I'll trouble you to remember, Fergusson, that you're speaking of a lady. And of my wife."

"Prospective," murmured Starr, who was very literal.

Casey continued to glare unappeased, and I hastily interposed.

"But you have n't told us her name. We want to go and see her, but we've got to know where she lives."

"Now, that's awfully jolly in you, old chap"—Casey quite glowed with gratitude. "Of course I want you all to know her, for I expect you to be at my house most of the time."

He spoke with confidence, and we endeavored not to exchange glances. We all owed Casey money, and he owed each of us a little more than we owed him, so the easy familiarity with which he referred to an establishment was rather staggering. Meanwhile he continued, already sadly retrospective, after the manner of prospective Benedicts.

"It will be a wrench to break away from you chaps, for it will make a difference, of course. It always does."

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VOL. LXXXIV.—17

We nodded and smoked gloomily. After all, old Casey was a good fellow and we hated to hand him over to a girl. Presently he spoke again, quite husky with emotion:

"Jolly old dirty rooms! We've had some bully times here."

Again we nodded, and Starr removed his pipe long enough to utter a platitude:

"Money is not everything."

"Perhaps not," said Fergusson, who hankered for the flesh-pots, "but it comes close enough for a fellow not to take any chances when it's in sight."

"Yes," said Casey simply; "that's what I think."

We exchanged glances openly this time, and our mental vision of the establishment began to take brownstone form. Involuntarily I straightened my tie and wondered how we should all manage frock coats for a noon wedding.

"I suppose," I hazarded, "we'll be ushers, or something?"

"Two of you ushers and the third best man. Cut for best man—ace low and low gets it."

He held out a pack of cards and we cut solemnly. Fergusson got the ace of spades, so Starr and I were relieved, though slightly jealous. Casey had greatly increased in importance during the last few minutes.

"Well, Randy," he said, "it's up to you. But in view of what you said a while ago I don't know that you'll care to accept."

Fergusson became quite incoherent in his protestations, and after they had shaken hands several times the incident was considered closed.

"Shall we call together or one at a time?" inquired Starr. "And beginning when?"

"We have only two tuxedos in the bunch," I remarked, "and one frock coat that is n't shiny. We had better hunt in couples at night—you and Randy, Starr. I will go alone this afternoon, plus top hat and frock coat, eh?"

"No, you don't," objected Fergusson; "the best man gets first innings. I go this afternoon, frock coat, top hat, *and* white chrysanthemum."

"It's up to you, Casey," said Starr. "Which of us calls first on Miss—by the way, what's her name?"

"I don't know," said Casey.

This was a facer, but we took it calmly, and Starr inquired where she lived.

"I don't know that either."

"See here, Casey," I began, "if you've been kidding us——"

"I never was more serious in my life. I'm going to be married."

"Feel his pulse," suggested Randy. "He seems rather feverish."

But Casey pushed him to one side and began to explain, now and then running his fingers through his already rampant hair as he talked.

"You see," he said earnestly, "something has *got* to be done. We have arrived at a crisis that must be met. The money market is uncommonly tight, Mrs. Stubbs is importunate, and a panic is imminent. When do you expect another remittance, Starr?"

"Nothing doing. Overdrawn to the limit."

Starr was studying anatomy as taught in musical comedy as well as at the medical school, and had already become an authority in the former branch of his chosen profession. Meanwhile his father remitted regularly, although not so generously as we could have wished.

Casey turned to Ferguesson.

"How about your last batch of manuscript, Randy? Are they all in?"

"Well, yes," admitted Ferguesson, "but one of them had a letter instead of the printed slip, so that is a distinct advance. And I'm working on a corker now—the most unusual situation!"

Casey's eyes questioned me.

"Any luck, Billy?"

"Nothing doing. The fiction market must be overstocked. But the book is out and in January there'll be royalties."

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast," quoted Starr, but Casey merely resumed the development of his plan.

He said it was necessary that one of us at least should live on Easy Street, in order to provide a haven of retreat in times of emergency. He had decided that this was best accomplished by marriage, for, as he truly remarked, most Johnnies hitched up to somebody some time, and it was just as easy to love a rich girl as a poor one. The father of the Fair Unknown was to endow them with the establishment as a wedding gift and provide Casey with a lucrative berth down-town, in order to preserve his independence.

"Now, you all know," he said impressively, "I'm not much on girls. In fact, I'm always acutely miserable when one corners me. But I'm willing to make the sacrifice because I have no budding genius to be watched and nourished. Of course it would be fatal to you literary fellows to have your careers interfered with just now. And a girl always interferes."

We could not deny it—she did. Experience had demonstrated it many times.

"And so," remarked Casey, "I'm willing to be married, although I don't deny it is a bitter pill. And since I am the lamb that is to be led bleating piteously to the altar, it only remains for you to find the girl."

"Find the girl!" we echoed blankly.

"That's what I said. You can't expect me to hunt her up as well as marry her. There are limits even to my endurance."

In spite of ridicule and protest Casey remained firm, and, much to our surprise, we found ourselves following his instructions and instituting still hunts to discover and secure a suitable victim.

We industriously attended teas, receptions, and dances. We did even more, for we sought abjectly for invitations to houses we once haughtily ignored, where the air was heavy with luxury and the clink of coin always in evidence.

It was a strenuous life we led, for the finding of a bride for Casey had become an obsession. Not a pink and white *débutante* was introduced, but we scanned her carefully to see if she would be satisfactory. Then we would go home and report to Casey—luxuriously sprawled on the couch and revelling in his pipe and his oldest clothes. But he developed a critical faculty that proved most inconvenient.

"What's that?" he exclaimed, interrupting a panegyric of Fergusson's. "Little, and blonde, and *plump*? Not much! These small, fair women get enormously fat and have three chins. Now, I'd do a good deal for you, but I simply won't spend my declining years sitting opposite three chins three times a day. You can't expect it."

So the time slipped away, and we began to have a goaded and harassed feeling. Fergusson abandoned fiction and took a job on a newspaper, to keep an adequate supply of cash on hand, while I sat up nights trying to evolve captivating plots and also grind out verses to keep the pot boiling.

Finally Starr announced that, quite by accident, he had discovered her. He had been to the Graysons' to have a look at the twins, and had found that one squinted and the other had a bad complexion. So he came away feeling discouraged, but somehow found himself under an awning and mingling with a stream of arriving guests. Starr said he did not know why he went into a perfectly strange house, unless it was because his feet had grown so accustomed to climbing steps covered with red carpet that they carried him straight up without his volition.

He was inclined to think, however, that he was personally conducted by the hand of Providence when he saw a white-robed vision smiling at him over an armful of pink roses. She stood beside a corpulent matron in sleek black satin, who somehow suggested a well fed crow, and Starr shook in his shoes at the thought of confronting her. He felt a little dizzy as he heard himself announced and wondered how she would receive him.

"So glad to see you, Mr. Starr," she murmured. "So nice you could come after all. Yes,—this is Mildred. You would n't have known her, would you?"

Starr truthfully admitted that he could have passed Mildred in the street any time without recognizing her, and the Well Fed Crow continued blandly:

"Long dresses and foreign travel make *such* a difference. Mildred was educated abroad, you know."

Starr murmured something inarticulate and the W.F.C. resumed the thread of discourse.

"How is your Aunt Harriet? I am really very angry with you for not letting us know sooner that you were in the city, and if you did not look so much like your father I don't think I could forgive you. Is he well? And your dear mother? And how is your Aunt Harriet?"

Starr has no Aunt Harriet, so far as he knows, but he said every one was much as usual and waited to see what next.

"Mildred dear," remarked the Crow, "I will leave you to entertain Mr. Starr, for I'm sure you both want to recall old times. We used to call him Bertie then, did n't we? Oh, dear! How you children *do* grow up! Introduce Mr. Starr to some of the girls, dear, and see that he enjoys himself."

Starr did not tell us much about what followed, but we gathered that Mildred was an obedient child and had made a point of having him enjoy himself. We in turn made a point of calling him Bertie, which annoyed him very much, as his name is Stanford de Coursey Starr and he always signs all of it.

We decided that Starr's judgment alone could not be trusted, so Fergusson went with him to call, and both were invited to dinner. Randy was rather silent after his return, but when we pressed him for an opinion he said that he hardly thought Mildred was all Starr represented her, but as there was no accounting for tastes she might suit Casey. He would have to see her and judge for himself.

It was not long after this that I found Fergusson busy writing verses. I was surprised, for while Randy is great on battle, murder, and sudden death in literature, he usually does n't attempt to interfere with Byron or any of those sentimental chaps. However, he said he did not intend it for publication, but for Casey, which of course was a different matter.

"How 's this?" he inquired.

"Poised on footsteps light and airy,
She floats, my dainty little fairy."

"Hold on," I interrupted. "She can't float while she's poised; it's a physical impossibility. Make it 'stands' or 'waits.' 'She waits,' etc."

"I don't want her merely waiting," he objected. "Any washer-woman can do that. I want something delicately expressive, something

ethereal—like the slight harebell raising its head elastic from her airy tread, you know."

I brought the Master Hand to his assistance.

"Her eyes like stars of twilight fair,
Like twilight too her dusky hair."

"Exactly," he agreed; "only, it's not dusky."

"What is it?" I inquired with interest.

"Red," quoth Randy. "Go to the devil."

I went to Starr and found him dressing to dine out. Sitting down on the bed, I watched him tie his cravat and considerably waited until the crucial moment was over before I spoke.

"Bertie," I began, "what color is Mildred's hair?"

"What's that to you?" he snapped.

"Did you tell Casey it was red? It might make a difference."

"Who said it was red? It's golden, if you must know, and when the sun shines on it——"

He took a carnation from the water pitcher and carefully fastened it in his buttonhole.

"Well," I said, "what happens when the sun shines on it? Does it fade or come off?"

Starr brushed his hat and took up his coat.

"You think you're clever," he remarked, "but, really, you know, you're only asinine."

Casey and I went to the theatre that night and sat inconspicuously in the gallery. From that secluded retreat we saw Starr afar off in a box, in close conjunction with a yellow head, a white gown, and a bunch of violets. I handed Casey the glasses.

"There's your bride," I remarked. "Have a look."

Casey focussed the glasses without special interest.

"I forked up the money for the violets, but I did n't know you bought them by the ton," was his only comment.

We saw Starr carelessly stepping into a brougham after the show, and I remarked to Casey as we turned up our coat collars (it was raining) that such luxuries looked good to me.

"I shall have a Mercedes," he replied. "Horses are out of date."

"But suppose Mrs. Casey prefers them?"

This remark was merely tentative, and Casey ignored it as we watched the wheels of Mildred's carriage disappear around the corner.

"April is a good month," I suggested.

"Yes," he acquiesced. "It is a beastly night, is n't it?"

The last remark sounded irrelevant and was not.

On returning to our rooms we found Fergusson exhausted but tri-

umphant, the completed verses in one hand and a ham sandwich in the other. Between bites he read it to us:

"My lady hath a charming face,
My lady's form is full of grace,
My lady's eyes are bright;
At every note of her sweet voice
The feathered songsters all rejoice
And carol with delight.

"She's kind to everything but me—
The little birds on every tree,
The bees that hum above her;
To me she's fair and cold, like snow;
I wonder if she treats me so
Because she knows I love her."

"I don't blame her," Casey spoke warmly. "Bees humming around her head and a whole aviary of birds piping up whenever she opens her mouth. You'd better drop it, Randy. Things like that are cruelty to animals."

"What's the matter with it?" inquired Randy. "I'm sure it is very complimentary, and it rhymes perfectly. Perhaps you don't catch the idea. Now listen."

At the fourth line I interrupted.

"To tell the truth, Randy," I said, "we saw Mildred to-night, and she does n't look like a girl who could appreciate poetry."

"Who said she could? I saw at a glance she was not the one for Casey. All she wants is candy and flowers and some one to flirt with. I don't care for the type."

"Then who?"—I indicated the sonnet. "If not Mildred, *who?*"

"Her cousin Julie, of course. I met her the other night. Now, *there's* a girl for you. Dignified, calm, intellectual, with repose of manner and lots of *savoir faire*. No little simpering idiot of a doll to dress up and play with."

"Well, Casey," I said, "what of Lady Clara Vere de Vere? Does she describe well?"

"I will have a look and consider her," he replied.

Whereat Randy glared fiercely and we all went to bed.

II.

It was decided in solemn conclave that the best way to introduce Casey and make a good impression was for Starr to give a dinner and invite Mildred and Cousin Julie, with the Well Fed Crow as chaperon. Incidentally, we had learned that the Crow was known to society as Mrs. J. Schuyler-Smythe, but as the other title seemed appropriate we clung

to it when alone. The dinner was to be at Sherry's, for, as Casey said, if the thing was done at all it must be done right.

We all contributed, but as one of us was plainly superfluous I suggested that Fergusson and I draw lots to settle who should stay at home. Randy said he had no objection whatever to drawing lots, but he proposed going to the dinner under any circumstances. And go he did.

This explains why I found myself walking the streets at midnight with a girl I had never seen before. It happened this way: I had tried to write and could not, so decided to take a walk, hoping to gather some material for the next chapter of my serial that would perhaps lend a little much needed spice to the story. At least, I could fill in the time until the others returned and described the success of the entertainment.

I passed Sherry's and thought ruefully of the good cheer within and my consequently impecunious condition. Getting Casey married had proved to be expensive business, but he made notes of everything (to be repaid with interest), so we looked upon it in the light of an investment—as he sensibly advised us to do.

I stopped in at a few haunts of Bohemia, but there seemed to be nothing doing anywhere that could be of the least use to the literary aspirant. Therefore, much disgusted and somewhat depressed, I started for home.

Before I realized what had happened I found myself in the midst of an excited crowd, with two or three fire engines in the centre and others tearing around all visible corners. An alarm of fire had been sounded in one of the theatres, I was told, and a panic had ensued; only some scenery had burned, but there had been much smoke and some people injured, therefore ambulances were in evidence and policemen waved their billies impressively but without apparent result.

I was just getting interested and preparing to enjoy myself when I was conscious of a little tug at my arm; I also noticed a faint perfume that I was sure did not emanate from the Bowery ladies who helped form the crowd. I investigated, and noticed that two little white gloved hands were clasped around my arm as though they never meant to release it, and a voice, tremulous, frightened, but wholly delightful, addressed me confidentially.

"Oh, dear! Is n't it dreadful?"

I agreed, since it seemed to be expected of me, but I doubt if she heard me, for she only clung more closely and spoke again.

"What are we waiting for? I'm so tired I don't know what to do. Where is Aunt Josephine? *Please* take me home."

I did not know what we were waiting for, so I said nothing.

"I think you're very unkind," the voice shook suspiciously. "I

want to go home. Please come, Harold; how could you let me get lost this way?"

I thought myself that Harold might have been something of a chump, but that he would probably have troubles of his own when he attempted to explain.

"Well, are you going to take me home, or *are n't* you?"

There was a decidedly peremptory note in the voice, and I knew it was up to me to say something, especially as the engines were going away and the crowd thinning out a bit.

"I shall be very glad to take you home," I said, "if you'll kindly tell me where to go."

My arm was released suddenly and I heard a horrified ejaculation.

"I beg your pardon. I thought you were my cousin. I don't know what you must think of me. You see, I'm lost. I got separated from my party in the theatre. It was dreadful"—she shuddered involuntarily. "They called 'Fire!' and women screamed and there was smoke and an awful crush. I thought I was killed. The next thing I knew, I was out here and I thought I saw Harold, my cousin, so I caught hold of him. But I was n't catching hold of him after all; I was catching hold of *you*, a strange man!"

"Poor but honest," I murmured, as she paused.

"Oh," she reassured me kindly, "I *know* you're honest. Besides, I have nothing to take. My aunt does not approve of girls wearing jewelry, and of course I have no money."

Neither had I, but I did not think it necessary to say so.

"It will give me great pleasure to see that you get safely home," I said, adopting Starr's best society manner. "What is the number?"

"Why," she said slowly, "I'm afraid I don't know."

"You don't *know*?"

"I came only last night, and I'm sure I wish I had never come at all. I hate New York. I suppose Aunt Josephine has a number; I'm sure she has if she ought to have one. She always has things she ought to have."

I remarked that numbers were customary and sometimes useful, and suggested that Aunt Josephine's surname might help some.

"Oh, *of course*," she said. "How stupid in me! Her name is Robinson—Mrs. Joseph Robinson."

I thought with dismay of the columns of Joseph Robinsons probably in the directory, and suggested the telephone.

"My aunt has a private wire," she returned. "I heard her say to-night she couldn't be bothered with being called up all the time, so very few people know what it is. I'm not one of them."

The situation was becoming interesting, and I pondered anxiously as to what could be done.

"Well," said my unsought charge, "am I to stand here all night in thin slippers?"

"Certainly not," I replied. "We will—er—stroll around and decide what can be done."

So we strolled aimlessly, my companion shivering in her white opera cloak and casting wistful glances at passing cabs, which, as circumstances prevented my paying for them, I could not with dignity notice. Conversation languished, and I occupied myself with wondering why Aunt Josephine and Harold had not returned to the theatre to look up their missing relative. I also wondered what the girl at my side was thinking, when she suddenly spoke and thereby enlightened me.

"Well," she said, "are n't you ever going to do anything? I should think a man——"

She left the sentence unfinished, but at that moment I silently anathematized Casey and all the dinner party and consigned them to a retreat much warmer than the streets of New York at midnight.

"Could n't you take me home to your wife? Or your mother?" There was now a hint of tears in the voice, and I felt very guilty at not being able to produce a wife or a mother at an instant's notice.

I suddenly remembered that I had fifty cents left after the last call for funds to finance the dinner; at least, that would give us a right to light and warmth for a while, and some hot chocolate; so we went into a little restaurant, much frequented by the impecunious genius who finds it impossible to live on fame alone. It was there I discovered that I had been unappreciatively and stolidly walking about with the very prettiest girl I had ever seen in my life, and I was not without experience.

I'm not going to describe her. I will say only that against the general dinginess of the café and the men and women scattered about it, this girl in her dainty, spotless toilet and radiant youth made a picture long to be remembered, and I noticed with resentment that I was not the only one who knew it. She had cast aside her cloak and was plainly enjoying herself.

"It's an adventure," she said gaily, "and I've always been so well chaperoned! Suppose we tell our names; we can forget them later if necessary. I'm Nancy Welles, with an *e*. I'm from Philadelphia, on a visit, and enjoying myself for the first time. And you?"

I told her my name was William Leigh, and she knit her brows thoughtfully.

"It sounds familiar."

"You may have seen it," I tried to speak with due modesty. "I write for the magazines."

"Ah, yes," said Miss Nancy Welles; "little stories."

Alas, for fame!

The chocolate came, and she sipped it appreciatively, glancing at me now and then through her long lashes in a manner that made me thoroughly uncomfortable. I resented her evident summing up of my character, yet was constantly afraid she would stop looking at me before I determined whether her eyes were blue or gray. I found out later that they were hazel and changed with her moods. But this is a digression.

The chocolate finished, Miss Welles rested her elbows on the table and stared thoughtfully at me, her chin in her hands.

"I'm wondering," she said, "whether the cold gray dawn of the morning after will find us wandering about the streets together. Perhaps Aunt Josephine will advertise in the morning papers; or I might put in a 'personal' myself. She could say, 'Come home; all is forgiven'; I might say—but what *could* I say?"

But I had arrived at a conclusion. I should take her home with me and cast myself upon the mercy of Mrs. Stubbs. I shuddered to think of my interview with that eminently respectable matron roused from her virtuous slumbers and confronted with the world, the flesh, and the devil as typified by Miss Welles, myself, and our predicament. Nevertheless, I should do it, because there was obviously nothing else to be done.

I explained my plan and she at once agreed, remarking that she had thought of suggesting a hotel, but she doubted if she would be received anywhere. As I had not the price of admission, I encouraged the doubt, and we again sallied forth.

Just as we turned the corner I noticed a brougham moving slowly down the street, and as the full strength of the arc lamp fell upon it Miss Nancy Welles gave a hurried exclamation and pushed me forward.

"Hurry!" she exclaimed. "Run! Catch it. It's William and the carriage. Don't let it get away. *W-i-l-l-i-a-m!* Oh, please run!"

I did run, and collided violently with a female rushing in the opposite direction.

"Miss Nancy!" she gasped. "Oh, Miss Nancy! *What* a turn you've give us, miss! 'Thank Heaving you're safe!'"

"Of course I'm safe, Perkins. Don't be ridiculous. And I must say I think you have been a very long time coming to look for me. I don't understand it at all. What did you mean by leaving me alone all this time? I might have been killed if it had n't been for this gentleman. I certainly think I'm entitled to some consideration; here I've been waiting and simply freezing to death."

Thus did Miss Welles carry war into the enemy's country and avoid

inconvenient questions. She paid scant attention to the maid's protests that she and William had been patrolling the streets in one direction while Mr. Robinson went in another, including the station house, the hospitals, and the morgue, and that they had returned often and without avail to the theatre; also that Mrs. Robinson was at home in hysterics.

"Well, all I know is that you must have been *very* careless not to see me," she said severely. "I had to scream myself hoarse to attract your attention at last. And so I shall tell Mrs. Robinson. You might as well get on the box with William, Perkins; this gentleman will come inside with me. He takes much better care of me than you do."

And Perkins, disapproving but helpless, obeyed.

Our drive was very silent, but as we drew up before a large stone house Miss Welles spoke suddenly.

"I'm not the kind of girl that likes to talk to strange men, you know."

"I understand," I said. "To-night shall be forgotten as far as I am concerned. I will not presume."

"*Don't*," she spoke quickly; "don't spoil it. It has been so nice—I mean the last part. And I'm going to know you quite properly. I will tell Aunt Josephine that you rescued me most heroically from the flames, and she will send you a card to her at-home. She'll love to do it, because you're literary, and literature is her latest fad. Mostly the women are frumps and the men have queer-looking hair, so I escape when I can. But next week I'll be on hand, and—you'll come, won't you?"

I said I would. Perkins had opened the carriage door and now stood beside it in an attitude of long suffering, but still Nancy lingered. Suddenly the corners of her mouth curved mutinously, and she dimpled adorably.

"I knew it was all right from the first," she said; "but slippers are not comfortable for walking, and cabs are not really improper. When you ordered chocolate I realized how *safe* you were to champion luckless damsels; but when you did not tip the waiter I understood the whole thing. Poor fellow! He looked so surprised. We must go back some day and make it up to him. Only you ought to have told me at first, and we could have talked it over comfortably. Men are so foolish."

Sheer surprise kept me silent, and as she pushed back the lap-robe I got out and stood at the door of the brougham, trying to think of something effective to say that would not convey too much to the listening Perkins. As I stood there, the door of the next house opened and the steps were flooded with light. Three men emerged, with the complacently prosperous air of those who have dined slowly and well, and

I felt as though I were dreaming as I recognized Starr and Fergusson, with Casey bringing up the rear. Also, I was unhappily conscious that they saw and knew me, although they passed us without a pause or glance.

"Do you live next to Mrs. Schuyler-Smythe," I managed to inquire, "and do you know Miss Mildred Schuyler-Smythe and her cousin Miss——"

I paused, for Miss Nancy Welles's nose was pointed skyward and she stepped haughtily from her brougham as she replied:

"Oh, those impossible people! I believe I've heard my aunt mention them, but of course we don't *know* them."

They were all waiting for me around the corner, as I knew they would be, and I met the fire of questions as well as I could. Starr and Randy were in high spirits, but I thought Casey looked depressed, and once or twice he smothered a yawn.

"Well," said Randy, as we reached our rooms, "it's been a great night for all of us, eh, Casey?"

"Speak for yourself," he returned. "Maybe you enjoyed it; I did n't. I know what Mr. Schuyler-Smythe died of and how long he was sick; I know he never *could* take green turtle soup without indigestion and always *would* order it, and that he never liked caviare. I know that Mildred had chicken-pox when she was five and measles when she was six, and that she inherits her father's delicate digestion. Sometimes she has trouble with her liver——"

"Shut up!" interrupted Starr, but Fergusson took up the thread of discourse.

"Old Casey was *great*," he said. "You should have seen him making himself solid with mother. Honestly, I did n't think he had it in him to be so diplomatic."

Casey grinned in rather a sickly manner.

"Good Lord!" he said. "*Somebody* had to talk to the old lady. You fellows had n't time."

"She's invited him to dinner Thursday," said Starr. "I think myself the thing is as good as settled already."

I felt much relieved to hear it, but as I was going to bed Casey came into my room and lingered there, talking about nothing in particular.

"Billy," he said finally, "I got a look at your friend of the fire as we passed the carriage to-night. She looked all right. Take me around to call, will you? You've done nothing for me so far, and you are in honor bound to help, you know."

I said nothing. At that moment I disliked Casey intensely.

"You know?" he repeated sharply, with a rising inflection.

"Yes," I said; "I know. It's silly business."

"Not at all," said Casey; "simply business."

I said something about wishing to be left in peace to sleep when I was sleepy.

"I expect you to do your part," said Casey. "I'm willing to make the sacrifice, but it's up to you to help when you can. Remember your career."

"Confound my career!"

"Certainly," said Casey. "Good-night."

III.

I got a card to Mrs. Joseph Robinson's "At Home," and said nothing about it. One minute I decided to go, and the next I bitterly reflected that it would be better for me to keep out of the way of temptation. I had not yet, however, discovered the color of Miss Nancy Welles's eyes and felt I could not be satisfied until I had done so. This point settled, I should consider the incident closed.

So I went and it was indeed the beginning of the end.

Just about that time Casey developed an insistent personality that proved most annoying. He became curious as to my engagements and demanded detailed accounts of my movements every day. Then, too, he suddenly conceived an interest in my career and a desire for my society which might be flattering but were very inconvenient. Casey bought new clothes, and whenever I purchased a cravat he borrowed it before I had a chance to wear it. He wore a carnation in his button-hole and the smile-that-won't-come-off upon his lips. I had weakly consented to take him to call, and after that he went to Mrs. Joseph Robinson's whenever I did, as well as sometimes when I did n't.

And Nancy liked him. She said she found him charmingly original and awfully quaint and attractive, with his old-school gallantry. He was so different from the present-day young man that Aunt Josephine delighted in him and had urged him to drop in informally whenever he felt inclined. In fact, Aunt Josephine quite yearned to mother the dear boy. I quote *verbatim* from Nancy.

I had never noticed any gallantry about Casey, old-school or otherwise, nor should I have described him as quaint. Moreover, my own status with Mrs. Robinson was so formal as to be almost frosty, and she showed no desire to enter into any relationship with me, however remote. In fact, Aunt Josephine's manner was distinctly inimical, and I raged hotly but impotently.

I mentioned the case to Starr one day.

"You're talking perfect rot," he said. "Casey is forever tagging after me; I can't lose him."

Fergusson corroborated this statement with certain amendments, and added:

"He is tame cat about the house at Mrs. Schuyler-Smythe's. She's perfectly daffy about him. I wonder——"

Starr and I wondered also, and we all became thoughtful.

"I consider," remarked Randy, at last, "that Casey is as good as engaged."

"So do I," agreed Starr.

I felt immensely relieved, and thought I must have misjudged him. It is so easy to imagine things.

Starr walked down-town with me that afternoon, and it was evident that he was uneasy in his mind. When he told me he had read and admired my last magazine article I suspected he wanted me to do something for him, but when he added that I had not been paid enough I was sure of it.

I made a few tentative remarks regarding the political situation and other topics of general interest, but they were not well received and conversation languished.

"Billy," he began at last, "you're a good old sort, after all."

I thanked him and waited further developments.

"The fact is," he continued, "I'm in no end of a mess."

I immediately became apologetic.

"I'm awfully sorry, Starr, but I have not a picayune just now."

"Oh, it is n't money; it's Aunt Harriet."

"Who?"

"Aunt Harriet. I wish she had never been born, together with all my other numerous relations. In fact, I'm not at all sure they ever *were* born, and that's the trouble. I'm simply badgered to death about them."

I began to have a glimmering of light, and laughed unkindly.

"Well, Bertie, what about Aunt Harriet?"

"She is coming on for a visit; that's all."

"When?"

"Next week. I'm to dine with them the night she arrives, as a surprise. She'll be surprised all right, won't she?"

"Oh, what a tangled web we weave
When first we practise to deceive,"

I quoted maliciously, and then suggested to owning up to a case of mistaken identity.

"Mrs. Schuyler-Smythe would never receive an impostor," objected Starr, "and she's got to keep on receiving *me*. She thinks I'm somebody else, so I've got to be somebody else. Goodness knows I wish I *were* somebody else. Besides, you forget Casey."

I had forgotten momentarily, but I realized at once the difference it might make in his future. It seemed a pity that so eminently suit-

able a girl as Mildred should be withdrawn from Casey's radius of action. It narrowed competition, and that often produces disastrous results. Therefore I felt a budding interest in Aunt Harriet and a sympathy for Starr.

"You'll do what you can to help me out, Billy?"

I rashly pledged myself to do anything under the sun, and then hazarded a question:

"You really think Casey will win out?"

"Not a doubt of it."

It was delightful to hear the sincere conviction in Starr's voice, and I quite glowed with satisfaction.

"Well," I remarked, "old Casey is all right. Miss Mildred Schuyler-Smythe might live longer and do worse. And I hope they'll both be happy."

"Look here," said Starr, "you don't know what you're talking about. A girl like Mildred would n't look at Casey."

"Would n't she?"

"Certainly *not*. Sometimes you seem positively lacking in intelligence."

"Then"—I was slightly bewildered—"then whom is Casey going to marry?"

"Her cousin Julie, of course," said Starr, "and it is a most suitable thing. But Aunt Harriet may interfere, and it's up to us to do what we can. You want Casey safely married, don't you?"

I said I did, provided he got the right girl.

"Yes," said Starr; "that's it. So do I, and Julie is very suitable. But we've got to get busy before Aunt Harriet comes. Somehow I've taken a dislike to her."

"It is your guilty conscience," I suggested, but Starr was lost in thought and did not respond at once. Finally he spoke, as though simply following out his own train of thought and not with any reference to me.

"I've thought of garroting, and of kidnapping, and of all those things, but somehow I can't seem to dispose of her. You see, she is Mildred's aunt, too."

"Then, Bertie, are you and Mildred cousins?"

"No. You see, it is a rather complicated business. Mildred's mother married twice; and the first one was named Schuyler. When she married Mr. Smythe she clung to the Schuyler also, as being more aristocratic, and joined them with a hyphen after No. 2 died—many years ago."

"Then Aunt Harriet——?"

"Is the sister of Mrs. Schuyler-Smythe's first husband and no real relation to Mildred, but she is 'Bertie's' mother's sister. See?"

"Don't," I begged. "It is altogether too complicated for me. Who is 'Julie'?"

"Why, she is Julie Schuyler—niece of No. 1 and also niece of Aunt Harriet. She lives with the Schuyler-Smythes, and I wish she'd marry Casey."

Just then we both looked at our watches and simultaneously remembered important engagements. So we parted, but a little later, as I breathlessly ascended Mrs. Joseph Robinson's brownstone steps, I sighted Starr coming around the corner. Even as I entered one house he touched the electric button next door, a curtain moved slightly, and I saw a glint of golden hair at Mrs. Schuyler-Smythe's window.

I found Nancy at the tea table, as I had expected, with Casey beside her, which I had *not* expected. I had left him luxuriously sprawled on the couch in our living-room.

Casey was fluently agreeable, and Nancy was responsive. I intended to be dignified and distantly disapproving, but fear I was merely sullen. I know I sat and glowered like an angry boy, and the little imps of mischief that laughed at me through Nancy's eyes mocked unmercifully.

I shall always feel grateful to Aunt Josephine, although I am quite sure nothing was further from her thoughts than obliging me. Nevertheless, when she sailed impressively into the room, greeting Casey cordially and bestowing a slight nod on me, she did me an inestimable service. For Casey was obliged to go forward and respond politely, and while he was doing it Nancy turned and looked at me. As she looked the laughter faded from her eyes, and I saw the dawning of another light. It was something greatly longed for, yet not really expected, and I watched it incredulous, tremulous, excited, and doubting if it could indeed be true.

"Nancy," I whispered. "Nancy?"

She said nothing and I bent closer, oblivious to everything.

"I thought you did n't care."

Red lips curved suddenly and dimples were in evidence.

"Men are so foolish," said Nancy Welles.

I will not dwell upon the days that followed—days when I was entirely too self engrossed to remember Casey and his matrimonial prospects, or anything else. The world contained two people, and I was one of them—that was quite enough for me.

There were stolen interviews, long walks in the winter twilight, anxious consultations as to ways and means, and finally a decision. We spoke of it in whispers even to each other. It was a pity, for Nancy had always wanted twelve bridesmaids and a white satin train three yards long, but there seemed no other way to circumvent Aunt Josephine. It was to be the Little Church Around the Corner.

I admit to a creepy sensation about my spine when I allowed myself to think calmly. I had heard that love alone was not enough for the average woman, and how else was I to support a wife? But then I was not going to marry the average woman; I was going to marry Nancy, and that made all the difference in the world.

"At dusk," said Nancy, "because Aunt Josephine always takes a nap before dinner. It will be easiest then."

"At dusk," I said. "Ah, Nancy!"

I surreptitiously packed a few things, feeling horribly guilty and as though I were not playing fair in the game of matrimony. I should have preferred my own suit-case, but it was not to be found, so I appropriated Casey's and sat down to watch the hands of the clock. I wondered whether Nancy also had packed and was waiting for dusk; whether, after all, her heart would not fail her at the last moment, and whether—well, I suppose every one who has had the same experience has watched the clock and wondered what the book of life will have in store for him when he turns the leaf.

After a while Fergusson came in. He tried several chairs, and finally subsided on my hat.

"Look what you're doing," I remonstrated, but he paid no attention.

A red spot burned on either cheek, which I credited to a round of teas, or rather punch-bowls, but when he rose and paced the room I noticed an air of repressed excitement for which I was at a loss to account. At the window he paused.

"Beastly night. Cold, sleeting, slippery, and dark as Egypt in an hour. Beastly night."

I watched my opportunity, and when Randy in his restless pacing passed into the next room I seized hat, coat, and suit-case and fled.

Our rooms were on the fourth floor, because the rent decreased in proportion to the altitude. At the top of the third flight I collided with a stout lady laboring heavily upwards and wheezing audibly. I apologized, and before she could acquire breath to reply was gone.

It *was* a beastly night. I shivered as I pulled my hat over my eyes and turned up my coat-collar. In my haste I had forgotten an umbrella, and the sleet stung unpleasantly. I hoped Nancy would have more foresight and not depend upon me. She was to meet me around the corner from Aunt Josephine's, even as a cab was to meet me around the corner from our rooms.

The cab lamps were a welcome sight as I made the turn. To my excited imagination, the street was alive with red eyes that glared in disapproval of my errand.

"Number 29,180?" I inquired, with my hand on the door.

"No, sir; number 26,175."

But I was inside now and had given an address.

"Cab No. 26,175," repeated the automaton on the box.

"All right; go on."

I was glad I got there first, for I did not want her to wait for me. As I waited, I suddenly realized all I was asking of Nancy. I remembered what she was leaving and what I could give her in return, and the thought was overwhelming. Suppose she should ever regret it? Suppose—and then I saw her coming and forgot everything else.

According to agreement, she wore a long, dark cloak and was closely veiled, and I opened the cab door and hurried her inside without giving her an opportunity to speak.

Now, if Nancy has a fault, it is being too reserved, and therefore I was surprised when she precipitated herself into my arms as we drove away and pillowed her head upon my shoulder.

"Oh, Randolph," she gasped, "I'm so frightened!"

Randolph! And the voice was not Nancy's. Moreover, I could see the back of her head where the veil parted. Nancy's hair was brown, with a distracting little curl at the nape of her neck, but the thick coil that shone in the uncertain glimmer of the cab-lamp had a distinctly ruddy glow, and I gazed at it with fascinated horror. Meanwhile the voice from my shoulder resumed huskily:

"Oh, dear! I'm so nervous. Why don't you say something, Randolph? I do believe I'm going to cry."

This was alarming and indicated a crisis.

"Please don't," I implored. "I'm quite willing to say anything, only don't do *that*."

I felt myself suddenly released and heard a stifled scream.

"I'm sorry," I found myself apologizing abjectly; "I'm afraid you were expecting some one else."

I will not repeat what she said, for perhaps she was excited and did not mean it, but when I offered to stop the cab and let her out she merely made good her previous threat of tears.

"I distrusted you," she sobbed; "when you did n't say it I distrusted you."

"Say what?" I spoke absently, for I was thinking of Nancy and the street corner.

"You—you should have said:

Light of my life, are you waiting there,
With the glint of the sunset in your hair?

And I was g-going to answer.

In sunset or sunrise, on hill, glade, or tree,
Soul of my soul, I am waiting for thee.

What are you doing?"

For with my first glimmer of common sense I was trying to attract the attention of the gentleman on the box and return to the corner and Nancy.

When we turned I was surprised to see we were followed, for another cab stopped also, wheeling sharply when we did, and keeping close behind us.

It was welcome to follow if it liked. I was only concerned in retracing my steps as quickly as possible and effecting an exchange of girls. Moreover, I knew I should have explanations to make, for Nancy has an inquiring mind, and therefore I was silent and absorbed as we jolted uncomfortably onward. My companion afterward described me as "cold and neglectful," and certainly I was not as solicitous for her comfort as I might have been under other circumstances.

When the cab stopped I looked out eagerly. The corner was empty. Had Nancy, hurt and angry at my non-appearance, returned to Aunt Josephine? Perish the thought. Surely she would have waited for me a few minutes.

I jumped out and looked up the street. The pavement shone wet and slippery in the gaslight, but no one was in sight. I turned to my cab again, meaning to ask the girl inside to name some place where she might be driven and deposited. As I opened the door I felt a hand upon my shoulder. I turned angrily, but the man at my side opened his coat, and I saw the metal badge of the secret service.

"I arrest you," he said, "and I advise you to come quietly. You won't gain anything by kicking up a row."

IV.

I HAD not come quietly. I had resisted, argued, protested, but without avail. I was there, and I was not alone, for cabby and the red-haired girl accompanied me. The former was reproachfully virtuous, the latter hotly indignant, and we glared at one another with mutual distrust and suspicion.

"What name?" inquired the officer of the Fifth Precinct presiding at the blotter.

I told him, and he was about to record it when cabby interfered.

"That's a whopper, that is. His name's Casey; I seen it on the valise when he shoved it into my shins—H. D. Casey, large as life."

"An old dodge," remarked the officer, and H. D. Casey was duly recorded.

The girl gave her name as Julia Smith, but no one believed it, and cabby was Daniel McGovern, of which there was no reasonable doubt.

"What charge?" was the next question.

"Robbery. The woman is an accomplice."

Julia Smith and I sprang simultaneously to our feet, but we were contemptuously waved aside.

"I will hear the man's story," announced the officer.

Daniel McGovern deposed as follows:

He had answered a call and driven a fat old lady to a certain address, and been told to wait. She had left a hand-bag in the cab, but as she was coming back he had not thought anything about it, and had simply prepared to wait as directed.

"And," said Mr. McGovern, "fust thing I knowed, down come this young chap like lions was after him and in he gets, and shoves his valise agin my shins. 'Keb No. 26,175, sir,' says I. 'All right,' says he, 'go ahead,' and gives an address. And, being as it was the same street from which I had drove the fat old party, I thought it was all right, sir."

"I believe the man to be honest in his statement," interrupted the detective.

"So he stops the kebab, sir, and along comes this here woman."

Julia Smith gave an indignant gasp, but Mr. McGovern calmly continued.

"In she gets and he gives the address of a church, sir, and away we goes. But this here gentleman, sir, he was onto the young chap's little game and he followed close. My fare is a sharp feller and he seen he was follered. 'Go back where we come from,' says he, 'quick as you can.' And that's all I know, sir."

The detective here took up the story. He had been called up over the telephone by a woman evidently greatly agitated, and been told that a valuable package had been left in a hand-bag in cab No. 26,175. The cab had been told to wait at a certain street corner, but had disappeared. He had hurried to the spot and by great good fortune discovered another cab also waiting, whose driver had heard the address given cab No. 1 and could follow. So he had made the arrest, and here was the hand-bag.

It was an ordinary black silk bag of a type much affected by old ladies, but we all stared at it as though we had never seen one before, and the officer opened it as though he expected it to explode. I watched with a strange fascination the silk move as his hand explored the bag, and saw him grasp something and draw it to the top with much the same sensation that as a child I waited for a juggler to draw guinea pigs from glass tubes or roses from cabbages.

At this psychological moment another officer entered hastily and spoke to the desk sergeant in a low voice; the latter beckoned the detective, and the three conversed for a moment in whispers, then left the room, taking with them the unopened bag.

As the door closed behind them the girl turned impulsively to me.

"Now see what you've done," she said.

The trouble was, I had *not* seen, since the contents of the bag remained a mystery, but I said nothing, believing this to be the safest course. We were alone, with the exception of Daniel McGovern, who considerably looked out of the window, and a blue-coated figure seated near the door.

"Just think of the trouble you've brought on me," she continued. "Never in my life have I been in a police station before."

"Neither have I."

She chose to disregard the interruption.

"Of course I don't know—you may be innocent, or you may be a murderer—I should n't be at all surprised if you were. But you have no right at all to mix *me* up with your crimes."

At that moment I felt steeped in villany, but made an effort to vindicate myself.

"Listen, Miss Smith," I said. "By the way, I don't suppose that is your name."

"It will do for the present," she returned.

"Well, then, Miss Smith, I am sincerely sorry to have involved you in this—this complication. Believe me, I know no more than you do what it is all about."

Stony and uncomprising silence from Miss Smith.

"But if you will tell me who you are, or, better still, your father's name, it will be very easy to telephone to your house and everything can be quickly and quietly arranged so far as you are concerned."

"I will never do that," she replied. "No matter what they do to me, I shall never go home. I—I have left there forever."

I thought of Nancy, who had also left home that night, and felt more sympathetic toward Julia Smith, whose errand was probably similar.

"Tell me," I said gently, "were you running away? You expected some one, you know—and—well, your manner in the cab at first——"

She flushed a lively and painful scarlet. Red-haired girls should never blush.

"I was going to be married," she said.

"Yes," I rejoined; "so was I."

For a moment we remained in silence, submerged in gloomy reflections.

"Oh, dear!" she cried, in genuine distress. "What *shall* I do? He'll think I did n't come. And I left a note saying I was going to be married, and now I'm *not* going to be married, but I'm going to prison. And it's all your fault."

"Well," I said, "I was going to be married, too, and apparently I also am going to prison, although I don't know what I've done. And

I might say that it is all *your* fault, too, for if you had not come along just then everything would have been all right."

I am usually very polite indeed to women, and take the burden of their mistakes on my own shoulders with a pleasant smile, but there are times when one is goaded to the point of desperation and is obliged to speak his mind. When there is but one girl in the world for a fellow, it is certainly hard lines to be stranded in a police station with another.

A diversion was here created by the summons of cabby to the next room, and we watched him depart enviously. Mr. McGovern walked with a haughty manner that I found it hard to tolerate. It implied so distinctly that being detained as a witness was something very different from detention as a principal.

Again gloomy silence enveloped us. I was pondering the question of bail and making up my mind to request the use of the telephone. I wondered if my crime would prove heinous enough to prohibit it, and, if not, to whom I could appeal. It was unlikely any one would be at our rooms, even should Mrs. Stubbs condescend to take the message upstairs. We did not maintain a private wire ourselves, because we always forgot to pay for it, and therefore the company selfishly removed it.

I thought of the black bag and became absorbed in speculating upon what was in it. Why did not the desk sergeant return, and why had Mr. McGovern been called away?

I also thought of the morning papers and Mrs. Joseph Robinson reading them at breakfast. Even at that moment I found consolation in the recollection that Casey's name, not mine, would adorn the pages of the dailies.

Nancy, I reasoned, had of course returned to Aunt Josephine, and I could only hope that estimable lady had not awakened from her nap in time to discover her niece's departure. I felt that I had lost my life's happiness through sheer stupidity and was conscious of a desire to hit savagely at any one who chanced to be convenient. Therefore I turned again to the girl.

"Yes," I said; "but for you——"

I paused suddenly. She had bent forward until her forehead rested on the back of a chair and her shoulders shook suggestively. I had an uncomfortable idea that Julia Smith was crying and I was responsible. So I believed apologies incumbent and reluctantly approached.

"I'm sorry," I began. "I hope I have not offended you, but——"

She turned and raised her veil. Julia Smith was really very pretty, and the eyes that looked at me so reproachfully were like wet violets, but it was not for this reason I paused so abruptly. On the third finger of her left hand I had seen a signet ring I knew intimately.

In fact, it was *my own*, and she wore it with a calmness that was staggering. I was quite sure, for in addition to my crest there was the little bit chipped off the corner where Randy had accidentally hit it with the poker on one memorable occasion.

"Well," she prompted, "you were saying——"

But the officer returned, and I said no more. His preoccupied manner led me to think that something more serious than our unfortunate complication had been reported, and the hasty conclusion of our examination confirmed this belief.

"Do I understand, madam," he said, "that you claim you were merely on your way to church to marry this man?"

Then did Julia Smith amply revenge herself for any lack of chivalry on my part.

"I marry *that*?" she said, and made no further comment.

Well, we were finally disposed of after fruitless telephoning on my part—not even Mrs. Stubbs responding. My companion was entrusted to the matron, and we were promised we might see each other again in the morning, in the presence of a witness. For my own part, I hoped we might never meet again, and I have no doubt Julia Smith entertained the same sentiments. At any rate, she looked them.

I passed a restless night, and as soon as possible in the morning demanded the papers. Startling black head-lines confronted me, and I read them twice without comprehending them.

STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE OF MISS HARRIET SCHUYLER

Foul Play Suspected

SUPPOSED MURDERER, STANFORD DE COURSEY STARR

Starr is Missing

I rubbed my eyes and read again, only to discover that though Starr himself was missing, one H. D. Casey, presumably his accomplice, was already in custody. Shorn of padding the facts were simply these:

Miss Harriet Schuyler, a maiden lady of uncertain years, had left the house of a relative about four o'clock, in the best of health and intending to return to dinner. She had gone to the rooms of a nephew she had not seen for some years, intending to surprise him, and had taken with her a very considerable sum of money which she carried in a black bag. Said bag also contained another parcel which she appeared to value greatly, but her friends did not know what was in it.

When she failed to return they became anxious, and, finding the telephone of no avail, had sent to the address she had given. She was not there.

She had been seen by Mrs. Stubbs, the wife of the janitor, ascending the stairs that led to Starr's room, but Mrs. Stubbs had not seen her

come out again. All that day, however, Mrs. Stubbs had noticed signs of agitation among the young men who rented the top floor and had suspected that something was wrong. She had never entirely approved of them, but up to the present time they had done nothing actually reprehensible (so far as she knew), beyond being very uncertain with the rent and frivolous of manner. She did not think they ever went to church.

I laid down the paper with my brain whirling. After a while a picture slowly separated itself from the chaos of my mind. It was the old lady I had collided with when I ran down-stairs that memorable night. I seemed to hear her labored breathing as she climbed heavily upward and to feel the soft velvet of her cloak as my hand brushed against it. Again I read the article, and noted the number of the house from which she had come.

"It is not possible," I ejaculated.

But in my heart I knew Aunt Harriet had gone to see "Bertie," hoping to surprise him.

And Starr was missing.

V.

CASEY told me about it when he came to see me that morning. Or at least he told me all he knew, embellished with many unnecessary comments. As he was decidedly out of temper at the time, I will repeat only what actually happened and ignore his private opinions, which don't matter anyhow.

It seems that Fergusson went out immediately after I did, apparently in great haste, and Casey was left in solitary possession of our living room. He was just preparing to light his pipe when some one knocked; this knock was twice repeated before he troubled himself to answer, then, expecting Mrs. Stubbs, he simply growled, "Come in."

He was naturally surprised, therefore, when a strange woman opened the door and walked in. Casey said she was a very imposing personage indeed, with several chins, and dressed in purple velvet. She asked for Starr, then before he had time to answer gave a sort of screech and said:

"Oh, I've left my bag in the cab."

With that she turned and lumbered down-stairs again, and he followed, reaching the first landing just as she went out the front door. There he paused and waited to see if she would come back, not knowing just what was expected of him. Sure enough, she did come back, and he heard her interviewing Mrs. Stubbs, evidently in a state of great excitement; he also heard Mrs. Stubbs proffering the public telephone in the lower hall, and instructing her as to which door on the upper landing led to Starr's room.

Casey said that at this point he retreated, stepping softly that the stairs might not creak. He heard them creaking loudly, however, a little later, and a knock at Starr's door; he also heard the door open and shut and a murmur of voices. Being, as he said, a person who always attended strictly to his own business, thank God, he had heard no more. He had gone alone to the vaudeville and had come home, expecting we should all drop in as usual, but instead found the house in an uproar and our rooms swarming with police.

"And," he continued, "when I read the morning paper and saw that 'H. D. Casey' had been arrested as an accomplice, I knew right away it was one of you and came to see which."

"Where is Starr?" I asked.

"I don't know; I wish I did. I'm troubled, Billy, and I think you've all lost your wits. The old lady went into his room, that's certain. I might hope I was mistaken, but one glove was on the table and a feather on the floor."

"A feather?"

"Yes, a white one. From her bonnet, they said."

"It's preposterous," I said. "Why, the very idea——"

"Yes," agreed Casey; "of course. But why does n't he show up? He must have seen the papers. I know it's preposterous—but it's queer."

It was; I could not deny it. We sat in silence a moment, then my own unpleasant predicament became uppermost in my mind, and I broached the subject of bail.

"No go," said Casey.

"Why not?"

"They won't accept it. You see, you're mixed up with this thing also, on account of the cab and the black bag. And I must say, Billy, according to your own story, you've been a precious fool, to say the least. What do you want to go cavorting around in cabs and eloping with strange women for?"

I answered this question by another, as the least embarrassing mode of reply.

"What does Randy think about it all? You have n't mentioned him."

"I don't know," returned Casey. "He's missing too."

"What?"

Casey threw up his hands with a gesture of despair.

"Oh, yes," he said; "you're *all* missing, and you've all gone clean crazy, as far as I can see. You and Starr mixed up in a police row, and Randy gone—vanished and left no sign. I'm not sure that I am not about ready for a lunatic asylum myself."

The opening of the door prevented my replying, and a rustle of

skirts caused us both to rise involuntarily. My heart went down into my boots, and I felt the blood mounting uncomfortably to my face, as Mrs. Joseph Robinson confronted us with majestic scorn. Aunt Josephine had no need for mere words to tell us what she thought, for it was written large all over her. Nevertheless, she spoke, and, to my astonishment, she ignored me completely and addressed Casey.

"So here you are," she said.

He could not contradict so obvious a fact, so he merely bowed. Casey was not graceful; apparently he simply undid a hinge in his back and let himself down, then closed it up again. Mrs. Robinson continued.

"I shall not at present tell you my opinion of your conduct, nor what I think of your shameless abuse of my hospitality. For shameless it is."

Again Casey undid the hinge. He has since told me that it was the only thing he could think of at the time, so he did it at intervals during the conversation and felt like a jointed doll.

"No," said Mrs. Robinson; "this is no place for me to linger, although, under the circumstances, it seems to be *most* suitable for you. I have come to demand my niece."

My knees suddenly gave way, and I collapsed upon the nearest chair, quite unnoticed, for Casey bowed again and Mrs. Robinson glared fiercely.

"I have come," she repeated, "to demand my niece."

"I have n't got her," returned Casey, goaded to retort.

"Falsehood and equivocation are useless, Mr. Casey. My niece, my own niece, is incarcerated in this place under the name of Julia Smith. Foolishly romantic she may be, but I know she is not an accomplice in your crime, for a Welles was never yet a criminal. So I have come to take her home."

"Very kind in you, I'm sure," remarked Casey. "There is no place like home, is there?"

This flippancy was so displeasing to Aunt Josephine that for the first time she deigned to acknowledge my presence.

"Mr. Leigh," she said, "I cannot congratulate you upon your choice of associates, but I am sure you did not realize what you were doing when you brought this man to my house."

I murmured something unintelligible and waited for more.

"Is it not sad," remarked Mrs. Robinson, indicating Casey with an accusing finger, "to see one so callous?"

"Sad indeed," I agreed.

I was beginning to realize that Casey's name, not mine, had figured in the papers, when she turned to the door.

"I am informed," she said, "that this misguided young man will

be taken to prison this morning—there to languish and, I hope, repent. We will leave him to his reflections, and I, at least, will pray for him, for at some time in his career he must have had a mother.”

Casey did not attempt to deny this, and I said nothing, being occupied with an idea that had suddenly occurred to me. It was a desperate chance, but for Nancy’s sake I would risk anything, and the knowledge that she had not returned to the house filled me with forebodings.

“Will you allow me to see you to your carriage?” I airily inquired. “And perhaps I may be of some further service to you.”

“Hold on, there!” ejaculated Casey, but we both ignored him superbly.

“Thank you, Mr. Leigh; you are *most* kind.”

She knocked on the door as she spoke, and it was opened from without. I could see that the officer on duty was not one I had encountered the night before, and was therefore enormously relieved. Mrs. Robinson passed out and I followed, Casey’s overcoat on my arm and his hat in my hand.

“Good-by, Casey,” I said aloud. “Think it over and try to take my advice about making the best of a bad matter. Good-by.”

I caught a glimpse of Casey standing with his mouth open, but speechless, then the door swung to and I was free—free to come and go as I pleased, for a while at least, and to do what I could toward unravelling the snarl that seemed to enmesh us all; free to look for Nancy, and when I found her—

But Mrs. Robinson was speaking.

“As soon as I see my niece I am ready, Mr. Leigh.”

I came back to earth with a dull thud.

“Mrs. Robinson,” I began impressively, for I did not wish to be confronted by Julia Smith, “I assure you that your niece is not here. I—I happened to see the young woman, and I am quite certain about it. She has red hair and does not in the least resemble Miss Welles.”

Aunt Josephine wavered.

“If you are *quite* sure—”

“I am absolutely certain,” I asseverated, edging toward the door, for the open air looked good to me.

Somehow it was done. Unchallenged, I went from the police station in the wake of Mrs. Robinson, passing respectful officers, one of whom kindly held the door open for us, and out to the street, where a carriage waited at the curb. Never before had cobblestones and trolley-cars appealed to my sense of the beautiful, but to-day they seemed the open sesame to all that made life worth living.

I held the carriage door open, impatient to get away from a neighborhood where danger certainly lurked for me.

“Please get in,” said Mrs. Robinson. “I want to talk to you.”

I obeyed, wondering what next.

"Mr. Leigh," she began at once, "I am in great trouble. My niece has eloped."

I could think of no appropriate reply, so I remained silent.

"She went last night, leaving a note for me. I supposed, of course, that the man was Mr. Casey. When I read the papers this morning I was horrified and went at once to get her. Now I am more troubled than ever, for not only am I ignorant of where she is, but I do not know with whom she went."

Neither did I, and I also was very troubled. I hazarded a question.

"Did she—Miss Welles—*say* it was Casey?"

Mrs. Robinson drew a crumpled bit of paper from her muff.

"Read it," she said, "and judge for yourself."

DEAR AUNTIE:

Sit right down on the nearest chair before you read this, and prepare to be shocked. I am going to be married to-night at the Little Church Around the Corner. We had to do it this way because you would not have consented, for you never appreciated him.

I know he has n't any money; I know he has no prospect of ever having very much; I know he is nothing remarkable in any way and probably never will be. But I know, too, that none of these things matter, for I love him.

I'm not ungrateful for all your care of me, and I'm very, very sorry if I hurt you by doing this. But, oh, dearest Auntie, some time you will understand why I could n't help it. Of course you know who it is.

Lovingly,

NANCY.

P. S. Don't bother about sending word to Philadelphia. I've written to Dad myself.

As I folded the letter her favorite remark occurred to me. Ah, Nancy Welles, sometimes girls as well as men were foolish!

Aunt Josephine was wiping her eyes with her handkerchief, and to this day I remember the pattern of the lace edge.

"I thought it was Mr. Casey," she quavered. "He came so often, and she liked him."

"Perhaps," I suggested, "she has gone home—to Philadelphia."

Mrs. Robinson shook her head.

"I telegraphed my brother last night, and worded it diplomatically. I said, '*A most objectionable character loves Nancy. What shall I do?*' I received his answer this morning."

"What did he say?"

"He said, Mr. Leigh, '*Let the man go to the devil and send Nancy home.*' So I knew she was n't there already, and also that she has not written."

My prospective father-in-law appeared to be a man of action, and

I determined to avoid him for a while if possible. Aunt Josephine was now sniffing audibly.

"Where is she? Where is she? And if she would go off and get married, *why* did n't she say whom she was going to marry? Although," she finished reflectively, "if I had him here this moment I think I should kill him myself without waiting for my brother."

The latter clause prevented me from putting into effect a half-formed resolution to make a clean breast of the whole matter and cast myself upon Aunt Josephine's sympathy.

When we reached the brownstone front that had hitherto been so irresistible to me, I steadily declined many invitations to enter, for in spite of her former belligerent attitude Aunt Josephine now showed a disposition to cling to me that was flattering but inconvenient.

But I wanted to be alone. I wanted to overcome the strange apprehension that overwhelmed me and set my nerves jumping like a woman's—to think calmly and, if possible, to act quickly. It was imperative that something should be done, and there seemed to be no one else to do it, since Casey was at present incapacitated. Anyhow, I was sure my methods would be more efficacious than his, and that he would some day acknowledge I was quite justified in changing places with him.

As I heard the door close I glanced at the next house. The shades were closely drawn and the silence that enveloped it seemed ominous. I thought of Miss Harriet Schuyler going confidently forth to find her nephew and not returning. And of Starr—a good fellow, as we all knew, but quick-tempered and prone to act upon impulse; Starr, who was my friend, and was missing.

I wondered if our rooms were watched and thought it very probable that they were, yet felt irresistibly impelled to return to them. Then I remembered that Casey was known to be there. I was about his size, and the dark raincoat and soft gray hat I wore had gone out of there that morning; why should they not return with safety?

So I went home, trying to walk with the careless freedom of one who has a right to be abroad, but much inclined to slink around corners and evade the public eye. I had committed no crime, but to be under suspicion and "wanted" at headquarters certainly gives one a very weird and unnatural feeling.

When I reached my own familiar door I fumbled at the lock, dropping the key and starting guiltily as it fell upon the hall floor. Once inside I breathed more freely and looked around eagerly. Each dingy, defaced article of furniture seemed like a personal friend waiting to welcome me, and even the cracked mirror on the dresser appeared home-like and cozy.

I dropped limply on the bed. How could I ever have reviled that

mattress as hard and lumpy? It was surely made of down, and I would rest there while I considered what to do.

Soon a strange lassitude overcame me. I could see through the window the vista of chimneys and small bit of sky with which I was so familiar; I could hear the steady drip, drip, of the melting snow as it fell from the roof, and could even count the drops as they passed the window. But I could not move, could not think, could not even remember why I was there, nor what had happened.

I knew in a hazy, indistinct manner that something very valuable to me was lost, and determined to get up and find it in a moment. I wondered why the place was so strangely quiet, and listened for Starr's whistle, or the laugh that usually punctuated Randy's conversation.

The melting snow dripped on and I counted the drops—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven. I hesitated and began again—one, two, three, four—one, two, three—I lost count entirely here, for nature demanded relief and the sleep of utter exhaustion overcame me.

I slept heavily but not restfully, for out of an abyss of darkness I heard Nancy calling, but could not go to her. I saw her hand stretched toward me, but could not reach it; she beckoned and I could not follow.

Then, quite suddenly, the beckoning, appealing hand was raised in denunciation. It was no longer Nancy whom I loved, but Julia Smith, from whom I had escaped, whose voice I heard; and on the threatening hand of Julia Smith I saw my signet ring.

VI.

I SLEPT on through the afternoon and far into the night, waking finally to find myself sitting upright, listening with strained attention and every nerve on the alert.

How still it was, and how dark! I groped for matches, but, not finding them, fell back upon the pillows, gazing into the blackness with wide-open eyes, but with no desire for dawn. For although I had slept profoundly I had not rested, and the sudden return to consciousness found me unprepared to meet the light of day and be once more up and doing.

I heard the ticking of my watch and the gnawing of a mouse in the wainscot. My room was at the back, so the noises of the street reached me but faintly at the best of times, and to-night they seemed to have ceased entirely. Surely none of these things had waked me.

Then I sat upright again and listened, for I distinctly heard a sound. I knew the next room was empty, for it belonged to Starr, and he was missing. Could it be, I wondered, that he too had come home unchallenged, as I had done, though "wanted" even more than I?

Where were the matches? I searched my pockets, although I knew they were empty, then carefully felt along the wall until my fingers

touched the door between the rooms, moving cautiously that I might make no noise. The door, usually sociably open, was closed, but as my fingers touched it I hesitated. I knew it was not locked, for Starr had lost the key and never replaced it; nevertheless as my hand closed upon the latch I paused. For I heard again the sound in the next room and this time I recognized it: it was the swish of silk caused by a woman's skirts.

I did not open the door. I could not, for something restrained me. Try as I would, I could not force myself to turn the knob. I could only listen with strained attention and wait breathless for developments. But nothing developed.

There was silence in Starr's room now—the deep silence that succeeds unwary movement. And so I lost my opportunity.

At last the gray light of morning broke. Little by little objects became discernible, and the rattling of many milk-carts announced the arrival of another day. Then, and not till then, I opened Starr's door and went in. Call it cowardice if you will. I only know that with the rustle of that silken skirt came a peculiar lethargy. I could not act, could not move, could not even think clearly. As Casey impressed upon me afterwards, I could do nothing but be an unmitigated chump, who might have saved us all a lot of trouble but flunked because of a woman's skirts. It was no use explaining to him the psychology of Unseen Presences. That was and is Casey's opinion, and it will probably remain unchanged in spite of arguments.

Just inside Starr's door I paused. The room was exactly as usual. Over the back of a chair a coat was carelessly flung, and the customary row of neckties hung from the gas fixture. Starr's slippers were beside the bed, and his brushes were in their accustomed place upon the dressing table. Mechanically I advanced and touched one of them. Everything was so unreal of late that I almost expected it to vanish into thin air, but the silver and bristles remained intact. Something else remained also—something I had not seen when I first lifted the brush.

Caught in the bristles was a small comb that I knew Starr had never used, and to it clung two long, brown, curling hairs. The comb was what Nancy had once referred to as a "side-comb." It lay confidently nestling in Starr's brush, almost as though it had a right to do so. Nevertheless, I sternly removed it. Gold-mounted side-combs had no place on Starr's dresser, so far as I knew.

Holding it in my hand, I stared stupidly, trying to extract some information from its mere presence. Did Aunt Harriet, I wondered, use Starr's brush before she vanished so strangely? But no, those curling brown tendrils were *young* hairs—something about them proclaimed this fact almost boastfully.

Meanwhile the morning wore on. The house on the floors below me awoke and went about its customary avocations, and a faintness within me recalled the forgotten fact that I had had no dinner the night before and that breakfast was necessary. I looked anxiously in Starr's mirror. Would the police, I speculated, realize I was not the same man they met in those rooms yesterday? I was about Casey's build; we both had brown hair, smooth faces, and our features were not distinctive. For the first time I was glad he had bought clothes much like mine (although at the time I had resented his doing so), because Nancy had said she liked them. There was also Mrs. Stubbs to be faced and reckoned with, and I had no doubt Casey himself would in some manner communicate with me. It was probable he was uncomfortable both mentally and physically, even as I had been the preceding morning. And I was not yet ready to communicate with him.

I plunged my face and head into cold water, and felt better.

"One thing at a time," I told myself, and determined to brave Mrs. Stubbs boldly in her own apartments in the basement.

I did not have to do so, however, for even as I opened the door to descend the stairs, I heard the worthy woman lumbering up, puffing like an exhausted porpoise long before she reached the top. I tried to assume my usual manner, but felt an overwhelming inclination to be suave and flattering to Mrs. Stubbs and accord her every deference. Much lay within her power if she chose to exert it, and I felt weak-kneed and servile before her.

She entered, arms akimbo.

"Now, Mr. Casey," she began.

I turned desperately and faced her. Better get the worst over at once. Mrs. Stubbs lifted both hands with a gesture of consternation.

"Am I myself," she gasped, "or am I dreamin'?"

"Mrs. Stubbs," I entreated, "be calm."

Mrs. Stubbs emitted a sound between a gasp and a gurgle.

"Yesterday," she said, "you was Mr. Casey, as I'm a livin' woman. To-day you're yerself and no other."

Then I plunged desperately.

"Mrs. Stubbs," I said, with assurance, "pray be calm. I am exactly the same person I was yesterday. Am I not always myself?"

She had no appropriate answer, and I continued fluently:

"Yesterday, during the unfortunate excitement that prevailed here, you were too much excited to realize what you said or to really recognize any one. I have always been myself and never at any time Mr. Casey."

Her lower jaw settled into a dogged expression that boded ill.

"You was Mr. Casey yesterday, that I'll swear."

"Woman," I said, determined to bully her into subjection, "be

silent. Don't you know that Mr. Casey is in prison? How dare you charge me with his crime? I'll sue you for libel."

Mrs. Stubbs had made no charge, but merely stated facts as she knew them. Nevertheless, she dropped cowering into a chair and threw her apron over her face.

"I'm a decent woman," she wailed. "I'm honest, I am, and never have I had to deal with policemen before. And I do say, and will say, that the goings on of you young gentlemen is something scandalous. And I hereby give you notice. And I'd like my rent, which it has n't been paid this long time."

Mrs. Stubbs paused for breath, then renewed the attack.

"Poor dear! With her purple velvet and white feather, as confidin' as could be. 'It's my nephew,' says she, 'what I ain't seen this many a year,' says she. 'I'll go right up,' says she. And go she did—me p'intin' out the way and her walkin' to her doom. Oh, dear!"

I advanced to Mrs. Stubbs and took her hand in mine. It was a horny hand, much roughened by honest toil, but never have I more tenderly pressed the softest dimpled hand of my experience. I had suddenly determined to try her with moral suasion.

"Mrs. Stubbs," I said, with gently modulated voice, "believe me, I feel deeply for you. I can well understand what this must be to one of your sensitive nature."

By the swift indrawing of her breath I knew she was listening.

"I regret deeply," I continued, "that you should have been so annoyed. But surely you do not believe the charges made."

"Where are they?" whispered Mrs. Stubbs, looking fearfully about, as though she expected them to come through the ceiling.

"Mr. Casey, Mrs. Stubbs, is languishing in a prison cell and has been since yesterday. I do not know why you confused me with him. Surely you read the papers and what they said. I don't know where Fergusson and Starr are—I wish I did."

I spoke truly enough there; I very much wanted to know their whereabouts.

Mrs. Stubbs suddenly seized my unoccupied hand.

"I allus liked you best," she affirmed. "You was allus polite and civil, so you was. And if you say you was here yesterday, why, I reckon you was. I'm that flustered I would n't know my own brother. The house is watched, so it is, and I've got to appear in court, they say, worse luck. For never did I tell a thing alike twice—so how am I goin' to tell 'em over again jest what I told 'em yesterday?"

I absently squeezed her hands again because I did not know what else to do.

"If I could have some breakfast——" I began, but she at once inter-

rupted me. Evidently Mrs. Stubbs had experienced a change of heart since she ascended the stairs with belligerent intent.

"Breakfast, is it?" she said. "Why, to be sure. I'll fix you something in a jiffy and bring it up. It's worn out with watchin', you are, like meself, and a bit of something hot will put life into you."

"I'd rather come down to your room," I suggested. "I could n't think of allowing you to climb all these stairs for me."

She rapidly expostulated that it was a pleasure rather than a trouble for her to climb stairs on my account. So urgent did she become that I suddenly grew suspicious.

"Is there any *reason* I should not go to your rooms?" I demanded.

Mrs. Stubbs quailed. I distinctly saw her color change, and a furtive look appeared in her eyes.

"Surely not," she hastened to assure me. "Come when you like and welcome. It's glad to see you, I am, as well you know. I'll go down now and get the coffee boilin', and in ten minutes or so, if you'll come down, I'll be ready for you."

But this arrangement did not please me at all.

"I'll go now," I said, "with you, and wait down there."

We descended the stairs together and in silence, Mrs. Stubbs leading the way. When we reached the door of her little parlor in the basement she opened it part way, and, turning, faced me.

"Come in," she said, speaking very distinctly; "come in and rest you. Your breakfast will be ready soon."

She paused, her head on one side, like an animal that listens.

"Come in, sir," she said to me; "come right in."

I entered and looked about. I had been in the room before—we took it in turns to visit Mrs. Stubbs and placate her when the rent was behind and our luck against us. It was the same, yet somehow different. A chair pushed close to the window suggested recent occupancy, yet why should Mrs. Stubbs not have occupied it before coming upstairs? Also, there was a faint, lingering perfume, and I sniffed it thoughtfully. In some way it was familiar. Instantly the woman beside me leaned over and flung open the window.

"The room does get that close," she remarked. "Air it as often as I may, it don't make no difference. A bit of freshness will be good for us both."

A latch clicked and a door shut softly. The strained expression faded from my companion's eyes, and she assumed a manner of bustling hospitality.

"Make yourself at home," she urged. "Go where you please and do as you please. And I'll have breakfast jest as soon as I can get it ready."

VII.

WHILE I waited for breakfast I opened the morning paper eagerly, yet fearing to find some new and startling disclosure.

Mrs. Stubbs subscribed to the most lurid of yellow journals. Two pictures confronted me on the first page. On the right a desperate-looking man with the fierce black mustache and heavy, overhanging eyebrows conceded to melodramatic villains glowered darkly at me: on the left an old lady with meekly parted hair and folded kerchief looked trustfully into space. Between the pictures, in inch-long red letters, was the searching query, "*Did He Kill Her?*" Beneath them were the respective names of Stanford de Coursey Starr and Miss Harriet Schuyler.

I read the article and learned from it that Starr had long and secretly made a practice of extorting money from wealthy women on one pretext or another, and that with the unravelling of this mystery other crimes would probably be discovered for which he was also responsible. I also learned that H. D. Casey, the suspected accomplice, had passed a restless night and was now supposed to be feigning insanity, as he insisted he was detained by mistake and had never been arrested. This latter, the reporter added, was an old dodge and would receive no notice from the authorities.

I ate my breakfast, the food tasting to me like ashes and the coffee containing dregs of bitterness.

"I'm going out," I announced to Mrs. Stubbs, evidently much to her relief; and sallied forth to look for Nancy.

I went first to Mrs. Joseph Robinson's, hoping against hope that Nancy might have returned. Aunt Josephine received me with dignified resignation. She was more angry and less agitated than on the previous afternoon, and was, so she informed me, having Nancy's belongings packed for shipment to her father.

"You see, Mr. Leigh," she remarked, "calm reflection has convinced me that there is really nothing to worry about. My niece has eloped, as she herself informed me. The deed is done, and I am powerless to prevent it. It is not unnatural that she did not tell me where she was going—I believe that is customary in honeymoons."

Aunt Josephine pronounced the last word as though it represented an abyss of degradation.

"But," I hazarded, "would you not like to know where she is and with whom she went?"

"I no longer have any interest in her movements. She deceived me and forfeited my love. As to her accomplice—well, she deceived me there also, for I thought certainly it was Mr. Casey. Of course you were out of the question."

I felt a burning desire to convince Aunt Josephine of her mistake; but restrained myself, for I saw she had more to say.

"My brother," she remarked, "arrived last night. He has a clear and logical mind and looks at the matter from a common-sense viewpoint, although in my opinion it hardly bears calm discussion. He says that when Nancy needs money we will certainly hear from her, and expects therefore to meet his new son-in-law at no distant date. When he does——"

"Well?" I inquired, as she paused significantly. This was a subject in which I was indeed interested.

"When he does, Mr. Leigh, I should not care to be in that young man's shoes."

With this succinct statement Mrs. Robinson rose, and looked at me in so pointed a manner that I had no choice but to rise also and bring the interview to a close.

While I was hunting for an appropriate speech of farewell, and not finding it, footsteps were audible in the hall, accompanied by a murmur of voices. It seemed as though the butler were expostulating with some one, but finally capitulated, for he flung open the door and cast an apologetic glance at his mistress as he announced:

"Mrs. Schuyler-Smythe."

Instantly Mrs. Robinson stiffened. Her nostrils dilated, and she threw back her head with the manner of one who accepts a challenge.

Mrs. Schuyler-Smythe swept forward, and although I had never met her I had no difficulty in recognizing the Well Fed Crow from Starr's description. The interview promised to be interesting, and perhaps enlightening also, for it was easy to judge from the manner of both ladies that they were old and sworn enemies. Nevertheless, it was not for this reason I stood rooted to the spot and gazed at them with fascinated horror. Following Mrs. Schuyler-Smythe was a graceful, girlish figure, with a coil of ruddy hair that turned to gold where the sun from the window touched it. A figure that looked at me with disapproving violet eyes—I might more properly say "looked *through* me," if I wished to be literal. A figure that I had reason to recognize and remember, yet it was some minutes before I could believe it was indeed Julia Smith who stood before me. Julia Smith—at liberty and about the last person I desired to meet. I was not sure whether or not she recognized me, and moved further into the shadow.

Mrs. Schuyler-Smythe was speaking.

"Madam, I beg to apologize for this intrusion."

"Don't mention it," returned Mrs. Robinson. "You must have had some good reason for coming."

"I understand," said Mrs. Smythe, "that we are companions in misfortune."

"I am not aware," said Mrs. Robinson, "of any misfortune having occurred to me."

The Well Fed Crow paused uncertainly.

"Why, I thought," she said—"I thought—at least, I was informed—your niece, you know. Servants will gossip."

"I do not talk to my servants," said Mrs. Robinson, and scored one.

Julia Smith was looking at me now—calmly considering me with her violet eyes—and the very marrow of my bones dreaded her first remark. It was not, however, addressed to me.

"Aunt Caroline," she said, "you have not yet told Mrs. Robinson why we came."

"Pray be seated," said Mrs. Robinson, with the manner of one performing an obnoxious duty.

Mrs. Schuyler-Smythe crossed two plump hands in her lap and heaved a profound sigh.

"You are aware," she said, "that we are plunged into deep distress owing to the disappearance of my sister-in-law, Miss Harriet Schuyler. No doubt you read of it in the papers."

"I saw the headlines," returned Mrs. Robinson. "I do not read sensational news, but you have my sympathy. Such notoriety must be most unpleasant."

"We are not without strong hopes of yet locating my sister-in-law. I do not accept the theory of her murder, for reasons of my own. The reason of my visit to-day was to give you some information concerning your niece, who, as I happen to know, is also missing."

I gave an involuntary start, but Julia Smith turned toward me with a calmly inquiring expression, and I endeavored to assume an indifferent manner. Aunt Josephine was interested also, although she sought to veil it by chilling politeness.

"Indeed!" she said. "*Most* kind in you, I am sure."

"On the night in question my daughter and my niece both went out also. They had—important engagements."

Did I imagine it, or did Julia Smith turn ever so slightly in my direction, and did the corners of her mouth quiver a little?

"They"—Mrs. Smythe hesitated and then resumed fluently—"they went separately and in cabs. Yes, in separate cabs, expecting to take some one else with them. When my niece entered her cab she found it occupied, but the door was shut and she was hurried away before she could expostulate. She had a very unpleasant experience."

"*Most* unpleasant," corroborated Julia Smith.

"The man in the cab," continued Mrs. Schuyler-Smythe, "was rude and without consideration. Evidently not a gentleman. I think you said, my dear, that this fact impressed you strongly."

"*Very strongly,*" said Julia Smith.

"To make a long story short, Mrs. Robinson, this man was waiting for your niece—of this we have circumstantial evidence."

"I should like," remarked Mrs. Robinson, "to see this evidence."

"Julie," said Mrs. Smythe triumphantly, "show your letter."

Julia Smith produced it, and Aunt Josephine moved closer to the light, that she might read comfortably. I shamelessly looked over her shoulder and read also, for on the small white envelope addressed to "Miss Julie Schuyler" I recognized Nancy's handwriting. This is what I read:

DEAR MISS SCHUYLER:

We seem to have made some sort of a mistake, and no doubt you are as disgusted as I am. I returned your property to you at once C. O. D., but what did you do with mine? I'm quite sure you don't want it, for you would then have an embarrassment of riches, but would you mind telling me what you did with it? I am quite comfortable and well where I am, but a trifle lonely, and should be glad to hear from you. My address is——

Aunt Josephine folded the letter and returned it to its envelope before I could read the address. I saw she was very angry.

"It is useless," she said, "for me to attempt to deny that this letter came from my niece, or to pretend that I am informed as to her whereabouts."

"Quite useless," affirmed Mrs. Schuyler-Smythe, "but pray believe you have my sympathy. Every one will soon know of her disappearance, and, as you say, such notoriety is very unpleasant."

She paused, having scored in her turn, and waited for Mrs. Robinson to speak.

To my surprise, Aunt Josephine turned to me in quite an appealing manner, for the first time including me in the conversation.

"Mr. Leigh——"

"Ah!" interrupted Julia Smith.

It was an involuntary exclamation, apparently occasioned by surprise.

"What did you say?" inquired Mrs. Robinson.

"Nothing," returned Julia Smith, meekly enough.

"Mr. Leigh," resumed Mrs. Robinson, "the excitement of the last two days has exhausted me. I am fast becoming a nervous wreck. May I request you to entertain these ladies as long as they desire to remain in my house? Personally, I am incapable of further exertion and must ask to be excused."

She inclined her head majestically toward Mrs. Schuyler-Smythe, but the Well Fed Crow had risen and was stalking toward the door.

"I came to do a neighborly act," she said, "but if you really do not care to know where your niece is stopping——"

"Not in the least," interrupted Aunt Josephine, in what Nancy called her Empress Dowager manner, but nevertheless keeping the letter clasped in her hand.

Julia Smith, following in the wake of her aunt, paused suddenly and extended her hand.

"My letter, please," she said, with calm assurance.

Mrs. Robinson handed it to her with a look that should have crushed her utterly. Julia Smith, however, calmly received both look and letter and departed with a final glance at me so full of recognition that it caused my pulse to quicken unpleasantly. I felt that, whatever might come of it, I must speak to her and find out the course she intended to pursue.

Therefore I made hasty adieux to Mrs. Robinson and boldly ascended the brownstone steps next door. Judging from the address of Nancy's letter, Julia Smith was in private life Miss Julie Schuyler. It was Miss Schuyler, therefore, to whom I dispatched my card and who came to me in the ornate drawing-room I had so often heard Starr describe. There was a large portrait of a young girl over the mantel. I supposed it was Mildred, and was gazing at it with interest when she came.

"Do you think it good?" she inquired.

"As I do not know the original, I cannot say. Have I the pleasure of addressing Miss Schuyler or Miss Smith?"

Julia Smith laughed, thus displaying a hitherto unsuspected dimple.

"But for you," she said, "I should have been Mrs. Ferguesson."

I collapsed upon the nearest chair. This was indeed news and of a startling nature. I suddenly remembered Ferguesson's agitation two nights previous, his interest in the weather, and his restless pacing to and fro while I watched the clock and waited. So I sat in open-mouthed astonishment, revolving these things in my mind while Julia Smith sat and watched me.

"Well?" she said.

"Randy?" I gasped.

"I prefer *Randolph*, it is so much more dignified. Yes, but for you——"

"And but for you," I interrupted, "I too——"

She nodded.

"I know. It was a strange coincidence. I think"—she smiled meaningly—"that you were very wise to come and talk things over with me. Let us be comfortable."

She settled herself in a low chair and waited for me to begin. I found it difficult to do so, but finally plunged desperately.

"How did you get out?"

"How thoughtful in you to inquire! I suppose you were dreadfully worried about me. By the way, how did *you* get out?"

"Don't you know?"

"No, but I have my suspicions. I saw Mr. Casey this morning—in the presence of witnesses."

The dimple was again in evidence, and I felt most uncomfortable.

"How was he?"

I tried to speak indifferently, but failed abjectly.

"He seemed well in body but perturbed in spirit."

Julia Smith laughed at some recollection, then became suddenly serious.

"Mr. Leigh," she said, "where is Randolph?"

I said most truly that I did not know.

"Don't *you*?" I inquired, for really it seemed fitting that she should be informed as to his movements.

"No, I don't—truly. You see what happened, of course. I thought you were he, and he thought Miss Welles was *me*. They must have arrived at the corner shortly after we left it, and got all mixed up, just as we did. You can see from Miss Welles's note (I saw you read it over Mrs. Robinson's shoulder) that when they found their mistake he left her and started back for me. What became of him?"

But I was more interested in Nancy than in Fergusson.

"Where did he leave her?" I asked eagerly.

"Don't you know?"—there was astonishment and doubt in her voice.

"No, I don't."

Julia Smith stared incredulously, and finally announced her opinion with startling frankness.

"I don't believe you."

Nor did my most eloquent appeals move her in the slightest.

The story I finally extorted from Julia Smith was something of this nature:

She and Randy had been secretly engaged for some weeks, and had planned to elope, as being more romantic than the usual course of events, as well as more convenient under the circumstances. At first, when everything went wrong, she had determined that she could never return to her aunt's house, no matter what happened, but after a night in the police station she had changed her mind, and telephoned them at home. Her aunt had come to the rescue and taken her away at once.

"I'm not exactly free," she confessed, in a frightened whisper, "because of Aunt Harriet. You see, she disappeared the night I did. They—the police—seem to think I know more about her than I will tell, so I'm what they call out on bail. It's a horrid feeling."

She shuddered, and I felt a creepy sensation about my own spine. Bail had been refused for me, and that also was a "horrid feeling."

"Do you think," I said, "that she—Miss Schuyler—Starr, you know."

"No, I don't. Neither does Aunt Caroline, because—well, I'm not at liberty to say. But where is she, and why does n't she come home?"

I shook my head ruefully. Why did not everybody come home?

"Tell me about Casey," I said.

"I saw him this morning, and I did not know until then that you had changed places. I don't know how you managed it, but I can guess. Mr. Casey was evidently very angry and appealed to me to say that he was not the man who came in the cab with me."

"And you said?"

"I said that I had never looked carefully at the man into whose cab I got by mistake, but I could positively identify the prisoner as Mr. Casey—he having often visited at our house. This was true, you know—he had, but I never liked him very much. He used to look at Mildred and me in such a calculating manner, as though he was comparing our merits. Randolph told me about hunting for a wife for him, and I thought it was outrageous."

"But why did n't you give away my little game?"

"Because," she said, "I had recognized you. You know I often saw you going next door. And I thought—well, Mr. Leigh, I thought perhaps you would help me. I was sure you were waiting for Nancy Welles, just as I was waiting for Randolph. When Aunt Caroline came to me early this morning, before I saw Mr. Casey, and told me about the excitement next door, I knew you would look for her, and I thought Randolph might be with her. Oh, dear!—I wish I knew where he was."

There was more than a hint of tears in her voice, and as she reached for her handkerchief I again saw my ring upon the third finger of her left hand.

"May I ask," I said, "where you got that ring?"

"It is my engagement ring."

"It does not look like a new ring."

"No, it is n't. Randolph is going to replace it just as soon as he can find something good enough for me. Why are you so interested in it, may I ask?"

Even now I would be loyal to Randy. Had I not often borrowed his property in an emergency when I had nothing of my own suitable?

"Oh, nothing," I said, "it is unusual looking, that is all. You don't find that pattern everywhere, you know."

I began to think of my own affairs again.

"Then," I hazarded, "I may trust you not to betray me? I won't keep Casey there long. Just at present I *must* have my liberty."

"No," she said; "I won't say a word. That is, if you promise to help find Randolph and Aunt Harriet. Find him first, please."

"First of all," I remarked, "I must find Nancy Welles."

Julia Smith gave me a peculiar look.

"If I were you," she said, "and you really don't know where she is, I should not waste time running around the city. Just go home and think the matter over quietly. Perhaps I shall think better of it in an hour and call you up on the telephone to give you her address. You know I have it here. You had better wait to hear from me."

VIII.

I WENT home, not because Julia Smith (as I always thought of her) had advised it, but because I did not know what else to do.

Unmolested, I entered the basement hall and sought Mrs. Stubbs. That worthy woman appeared hot and uncomfortable looking and very evidently out of temper. She had no news to impart. Yes, the police had been there and searched the rooms again. Yes, they had asked questions about me, but had not seemed much interested as to my whereabouts. No, nothing had been heard of Miss Harriet Schuyler, or of Starr either. For her part she believed them both dead. Might she consider us responsible for the rent of his room if she kept it as it was? Otherwise she would rent it if she had an opportunity, as she was a poor widow and must live.

I pledged myself for a month's rent and ruefully climbed the stairs. Never before had they seemed so long to me, nor had I been so reluctant to reach the top. For, once in our rooms, I would be alone for a time, and again a thousand doubts and fears would assail me. Solitude was obnoxious to me just now, and the dingy old rooms were filled with memories—unwelcome ghosts of a long ago that already seemed far away and a part of another existence.

I went to my own room and sank into the chair by the window, resting my head against the shabby, uncomfortable back and giving way to profound melancholy. It was really a luxury to revel in it undisturbed, so I gave my fancy full play and allowed the little devils of doubt and distrust to enter my heart and hold high carnival there.

Where were Starr and Fergusson? If Randy had really wanted to marry Julie Schuyler, why did he not appear and say so? If Starr were alive, surely he read the papers. If he knew nothing of Miss Harriet Schuyler, why did he not appear and prove an alibi? Above all, where was Nancy?

I turned my head restlessly. A faint perfume seemed to emanate from the old chair, usually saturated with tobacco. I sniffed wonderingly, decided it was imagination, and returned to my unprofitable

musings. By her own showing Nancy had met Fergusson. In my opinion mortal man could not be within her spell and not succumb. Had Randy, by any chance, deserted his own affianced and returned to Nancy? He was very good-looking—the only one of us who could really lay an honest claim to being considered handsome, and he could be very agreeable if he chose. Could it be possible that Nancy—

I sat suddenly upright; for from Starr's room came again the rustle I had heard the previous night—faint but unmistakable. This time I did not hesitate, but sprang to the door and flung it open.

"Who 's there?" I demanded.

Midway of the floor was a woman's figure. She stood, skirts gathered in her hands, as though poised for flight. I stared, incredulous, then rubbed my eyes and stared again. The figure hesitated, looked uncertainly at me, then advanced with both hands extended.

"Billy—o-oh, Billy!"

Then I too looked uncertainly a moment, doubting my own eyes, for it was Nancy's voice that spoke my name, and Nancy's face that looked at me across the threshold of Starr's room.

Only a moment I hesitated, then my arms were round her, holding her close, as my eyes looked down into hers and through them to her heart. Ah, Nancy Welles! How small and trivial appeared my doubts of a moment past, and how could I ever have permitted them to exist? Being a woman, she spoke first.

"Oh, my dear, my dear," she began, holding on to the lapel of my coat with her little white hands, "where have you been? How could you leave me? Oh, Billy! And I thought you were dead, or married to another girl——"

"No, you did n't," I interrupted. "You knew there was only one girl for me—you *knew it*."

"Yes, I *did* know it in my heart, but then you did n't come, and—oh, Billy!"

I drew her gently toward the old arm-chair. It was quite big enough for two, and seemed to welcome us cordially.

"Tell me all about it, Nancy."

So Nancy told me, but I will not attempt to give her words, for her story was often interrupted by irrelevant remarks on my part.

She said that she had gone out that stormy night, according to agreement, and had found, as she had expected, a man and a cab waiting on the street corner. The man had hastened toward her and said something beginning "Light of my life, are you waiting there?" She did not remember the rest, but had wondered at the time that I should be so silly. She was so preoccupied and frightened at what she was doing that she did not notice the voice was not mine. The cabman was told to

drive to the Little Church Around the Corner and the cab door slammed.

"And," said Nancy Welles, "when I heard that door slam I realized how *awful* it would be to find out after we were married that I did not really love you."

This cheerful idea having occurred to her, she had become so absorbed that she forgot her companion entirely until she heard him entreating her not to be frightened. He had called her "Julie dearest," which surprised her so that she had raised her veil and looked at him. Just at that interesting point the cab had stopped before the church.

I will omit Nancy's account of ensuing explanations, although it was well worth recording. Enough to say that they returned with all possible speed to the starting point, only to find the corner empty.

"But how did you come here?" I inquired.

"Well," said Nancy, "I could n't and would n't go back to Aunt Josephine, and I said so. Then Mr. Fergusson, who was in an awful hurry to get rid of me, suggested my coming here. He said you would be sure to drift in here finally, and meanwhile I could stay with Mrs. Stubbs."

"And Randy—what became of him?"

"Why"—Nancy's voice was troubled—"I don't know. As soon as we got here Mr. Starr—I don't know him, but that's who it *was*—rushed downstairs and caught Mr. Fergusson by the arm. He was very excited and seemed to be urging Mr. Fergusson to do something he did n't want to."

"Could you hear what he said?"

"No. You see, it took some time to win Mrs. Stubbs over to our side, and I was busy trying to convince her I was respectable, so I did n't hear. But"—Nancy's voice dropped to a frightened whisper—"after Mrs. Stubbs let me into her parlor, I sat by the window, and I saw Mr. Fergusson and Mr. Starr leave this house with a fat old lady between them. And, oh, Billy, I'm afraid it was Miss Harriet Schuyler."

Nancy paused, and I knew she was waiting for me to reassure her. I could not do so, however, for I too feared it might be Miss Schuyler. So after a moment she resumed her own story:

"Mrs. Stubbs was very kind. Even after all the excitement and the police coming here, she let me stay with her. She had seen and talked to Miss Schuyler about losing her bag before we got here, you know, and said her diamond earrings were so big she might easily be murdered for them. Oh, Billy, you don't think——"

"No, I don't," I assured her. "Go on, Nancy."

"She—Mrs. Stubbs went up to your rooms several times during the evening, and said Mr. Casey was the only one of you who came home."

After the police left (they watched the house from the outside, I believe), she suggested I should try and get some sleep on her little sofa in her parlor. I stayed there the first night, but I did n't sleep any, for it was too short for me. So last night she told me to go up into Mr. Starr's room and try and get some rest, as it was certain he would not dare come back there. I went, but in the middle of the night I got frightened and crept very softly down to Mrs. Stubbs for protection. It seemed to me that it was more than I could stand to be there alone."

So it was the rustle of Nancy's skirt that had waked me the previous night, and Nancy's comb I found upon Starr's dresser. Why had I not had the courage to go in and thereby save myself many anxious hours?

"I slipped up here when you came down this morning," resumed Nancy, "for I thought it was Mr. Casey with Mrs. Stubbs, and I did not want to meet him here of course. I've been here ever since in your room, sitting in your dear old chair, Billy, and wishing for you."

"Did Mrs. Stubbs tell you I was here and not Casey?"

"No," said Nancy; "she came up here and seemed to be rather uneasy about something. Finally she said that if I would take her advice I would go home to Aunt Josephine, and have nothing more to do with you. She believed you were one and all bad lots and was actually afraid of any of you. The first thing we knew both she and I would be disappearing like Miss Harriet Schuyler, and how would I like that? For her part she was going to put on her bonnet and go home to her mother's house: I was welcome to stay here if I liked, but she felt it her duty to warn me what to expect."

"And yet you stayed?"

"Of course I stayed. I wrote a note to Julia Schuyler and got Mrs. Stubbs to mail it, for I *did* feel a little nervous about staying here alone after the queer things that have happened. Something told me you would be sure to come to me, and so I waited for you. But where were you, and why did you take so long? It's your turn to give an account of yourself, sir."

So I told Nancy all I knew. Sitting there in my old arm-chair, with my arms around her, it did not seem half so dreadful as when I considered matters alone. I touched very lightly upon the incarceration of Casey and what we might expect when he was released.

"Of course," said Nancy, "it was too bad to leave him there, but you *had* to get out and come to me, did n't you, dear?"

After a while the twilight stole upon us, and with the gathering darkness I became very thoughtful.

"Nancy," I said, at last, "I'm going down to telephone to Miss Julie Schuyler that she need not send me your address. And then we must go to the Little Church Around the Corner—you and I."

"To-morrow," suggested Nancy. "I'm so tired to-night."

But I thought of Aunt Josephine, and of Mrs. Grundy as typified by Mrs. Schuyler-Smythe and other irreproachable matrons.

"No, dearest," I insisted; "not to-morrow, but to-night."

"Men are so foolish," said Nancy Welles.

IX.

I GOT a note from Casey the next morning. It said briefly,

Come immediately and without delay upon receipt of this.

I read it twice and tore it up.

"Are you going?" asked Nancy.

We had breakfasted together, my wife and I, at the very restaurant we had patronized for chocolate on the eventful night of our first meeting, and Nancy had insisted upon my tipping the waiter with reckless prodigality, to make up for the gratuity lacking on the previous occasion, she explained. When we returned to my rooms she wrote to Aunt Josephine, requesting to be furnished with what she lucidly described to me as her "things." It was with the greatest pleasure I mailed the letter, since it would prove to that austere matron that I was not "out of the question" after all. Then the postman had come, bringing Casey's note.

"Are you going?" repeated Nancy.

Before I had time to answer, there was a knock at the door and a diminutive boy thrust a telegram into my hands. I tore off the yellow envelope impatiently, with a premonition of something important or unpleasant. It read simply,

Come immediately to Fremont House, Boston, or telegraph me five hundred dollars without delay.

R. FERGUSSON.

I handed the telegram to Nancy and hastened to open the door in response to another knock. This time it was a messenger boy, and he thrust a white envelope into my unwilling hands, requested a receipt, and departed. Its contents were merely,

Come to me immediately and without delay upon receipt of this. I must see you at once. *Important.*

JULIE SCHUYLER.

I passed this also over to Nancy, and waited for comment. She picked up the telegram and considered it, her white brow wrinkled anxiously.

"If you go," she said, "I shall never see you again. Send the money."

"Dearest," I said apologetically, "I have n't got it."

"Oh," said Nancy, "but that does n't matter. I have."

I took her hand in mine and looked at the new plain gold ring that glistened on her finger. I felt that right now I must explain to my wife that Mrs. William Leigh must look with more respect at five hundred dollars than Nancy Welles had done. It was evident she did not realize that her base of supplies was cut off, and I hated to tell her.

"Don't you understand, Nancy," I began, "that your father may not forgive you for running away with me? At any rate, he won't for a long time. And so, dear, you must be content with what I can give you. I'm sorry it is so little—but we have each other."

"You mean," said Nancy, "that Daddy would disinherit me because I married you?"

"He might. Your Aunt Josephine, you know."

"Bosh!" interrupted Nancy. "Aunt Josephine, indeed! Why, Daddy could n't stay angry with me—he just could n't. I give him two weeks, and not a minute more."

I was silent. Try as I might, I could not bring myself to disillusion her. Nancy too became suddenly serious.

"Billy," she said, "you don't understand about Daddy and me. I'm all he has and he loves me."

Very simply she spoke, and at that minute I felt a sympathy for my father-in-law, for I too loved Nancy.

"And don't you know, you dear old silly," she continued, "that I have my own income from my mother? It is—oh, quite a lot—I don't know how much; but I'm twenty-one now, and it is mine to do with as I will. So there is nothing to worry about after all."

"Nancy," I said, and spoke truly, "while for your sake I am glad—for myself, I am sorry. It was *you* I wanted, not your money. And I expect to work for my wife."

"Don't talk any more about it," she returned. "We have other and more important things to discuss. First, there's Mr. Casey. Shall you go to him?"

"Liberty is sweet," I said, with meaning.

"Then I will go."

It was useless to argue the point. Nancy had but one reply, and it was an undeniable fact.

"If you go, they might keep you. They don't want me."

I picked up the telegram and pondered over it.

"I wonder what Randy is doing in Boston," I speculated, "and why he wants five hundred dollars. I don't like the look of it."

"Five hundred dollars, by all means," said Nancy, "but not *you*."

I turned to the third summons.

"Miss Julie Schuyler, alias Julia Smith——" I began.

I got no further, for there were hurried footsteps in the hall, a hasty tap at the door, quickly followed by another, louder and more

imperative. Before I could cross the room in response, the door opened, and the girl whose name was on my lips entered and closed it with purposeful manner.

"You did not come to me," she said, "and so I came to you."

"I had not time," I tried to justify myself; "I only just received your note."

Then Nancy came forward, and I introduced the two girls, adding:

"As you were such near neighbors, it is strange that you have not met before."

Miss Schuyler took Nancy's hand and held it tentatively.

"Shall we be friends," she queried, "in spite of our aunts?"

"By all means," agreed Nancy. "What *was* the trouble anyhow?"

"My Aunt Caroline's fox terrier," said Julie Schuyler solemnly, "many years ago killed your Aunt Josephine's blue-eyed Persian cat, which had trespassed into our back yard. Hence the feud—war to the knife and no quarter."

We all laughed, then Miss Schuyler turned suddenly to me.

"I'm going to Boston," she announced.

"Randy?" I hazarded.

She produced a telegram, and I read it aloud:

"Circumstances over which I have no control detain me in Boston.
Write Fremont House.

"RANDOLPH."

"I'm not going to waste any time writing," she remarked. "I'm just *going*. I want you to go with me."

Having stated her wishes, she glanced at her watch.

"We have plenty of time to catch the through express," she said.

Nancy and I looked at each other in horrified silence. Then I mustered courage to protest.

"I really don't think it necessary——" I began, but she interrupted ruthlessly.

"I've got to go. Can't you understand how I feel about it? But I've never been to Boston, and I've never travelled alone. Either you or Mr. Casey must go with me—I don't care which."

"Casey!" I ejaculated.

"If you won't go, he *will*. I can get him out any time, you know. It would delay me a few hours, that's all. I'm sure Randolph would be quite satisfied if either of his best friends came with me."

"It's simply outrageous," I said. "I won't go one step. Take Casey if you choose."

Nancy said afterwards that I spoke in a villain-do-your-worst manner, and that my whole attitude was melodramatic. As I had a desperate feeling that matters were approaching a crisis and that soon I

should know my fate, I suppose I looked as tragic as I felt. So we stared at one another in eloquent silence, until finally Nancy spoke:

"We'll all go to Boston."

Two energetic girls and one disapproving man! What could he do? In an hour we were on the train for Boston, and while the girls laughed and chatted gaily I was filled with anxiety as to ways and means. For while Nancy might have a comfortable balance at the bank, our supply of ready cash was limited, and cash you must have when traveling. As we pulled out of New York I managed to say to Nancy, *sotto voce*:

"How about Casey and his message to come at once?"

"Oh," she airily replied, "he can wait. He's quite safe and harmless where he is."

Now, I felt by no means so sure of this, for the wrath of Casey hung over me like a cloud, and I amused myself working out different schemes of revenge that I should practise were I in his place, until the girls would have no more of it, and commanded a different topic of conversation.

X.

It was in the lobby of the Fremont House that I thought I caught a fleeting glimpse of Randy. I was not sure, however, and by the time I steered my way toward him he was gone. I questioned the clerk at the desk. Yes, Mr. Fergusson had been stopping there for a day or so, but was out just now. Would I leave a message? No, he did n't know when Mr. Fergusson would be back, nor where he went; he supposed, however, it was the theatre, since the lady had insisted upon a carriage, as it was raining.

Lady! Ye gods and little fishes! I thought of Julie Schuyler, with her auburn hair and imperious temperament, and felt thankful she was safe in her room.

The clerk volunteered the information that they would probably be home before midnight, and considered the incident closed. I wrote a note to Randy, requesting him to let me come at once to his room and talk things over. Then I waited with what patience I could muster, since there did not seem to be anything else to do.

And Julie Schuyler waited also, with set face and a sparkle in her eyes that made me thankful I was not in Fergusson's shoes. I had not meant to tell her about the lady, nor indeed had I done so. I had whispered it to Nancy, however, and she with a burst of virtuous indignation had thought best to, as she said, "undeceive the poor dear," and suggest immediate return to New York. But Miss Schuyler declined to return. She would wait, she said, and see Randolph. So we all waited, and the moments passed leaden-footed perhaps to her, but with

surprising swiftness to me, for I was busy revolving plans for the assistance of Fergusson. We always helped each other out of trouble, and though no doubt he was much in fault I could not resist a feeling of sympathy for him and a desire to do what I could to smooth matters over, as I should have wished him to do for me had the cases been reversed. Moreover, I had a great curiosity to see the lady. So we all sat in the lobby, and I pretended to read the papers, while the girls talked in whispers, which I judged were in the main uncomplimentary to my sex in general and to Fergusson in particular.

All at once I heard a sharp exclamation. Julie Schuyler had risen and was staring at the door leading into the street as though she had seen a ghost.

"Mr. Starr!" she exclaimed. "I saw him quite distinctly."

Nor would anything convince her to the contrary.

"He was in evening dress," she said, "and carried his overcoat on his arm. He came in from the street and looked all around. I think he saw and recognized you, Mr. Leigh, for he went out in a great hurry. No, I am not mistaken. It *was* Mr. Starr, and he had a white carnation in his buttonhole."

This white carnation was as much a part of Starr's evening toilet as the coat itself, and was to me a convincing proof of his identity. I again sought the desk and questioned the clerk. That young man had apparently begun to look suspiciously upon me, for his answers were brief and rather snappy. No, there was no one stopping in the house by the name of Starr. No, of course he had not noticed the gentleman come in. Many people came and went, and it was not his business to spy upon them. Boston was quite a city, and there were a number of people in it he had not the pleasure of knowing, also some he did not care to know. I registered a mental resolve to complain to the management of the Fremont House about the manners of the clerk, and was ready to admit myself baffled again, when I noticed Julie Schuyler close behind me, apparently engaged in selecting a picture post-card from some displayed for sale.

"Don't look," she whispered; "don't even turn your head. He's still there—just outside. And he's watching you through the crack of the door whenever it opens."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite sure. Oh, Mr. Leigh, don't let him get away. Remember Aunt Harriet. I don't believe he murdered her, but where *is* she? Remember Mr. Casey, in prison for something he did n't do at all. Why don't you have Mr. Starr arrested and force him to explain? You can do it, for of course he is being looked for in every city."

I would not with my own hand set in motion machinery to capture and perhaps crush my friend, and I said so. Then the girl with red

hair and corresponding temperament showed me that she knew she had the whip-hand and meant to keep it.

"Don't forget," she said very pointedly, "that your own liberty is entirely in my hands. I should hate to interfere with your honeymoon, of course, but there are times when one must do one's duty, however unpleasant it may be. I have never felt exactly comfortable about Mr. Casey anyhow. I am quite sure he is perfectly innocent, but I cannot help having doubts about you, and who knows when my conscience may get the better of my naturally kind heart? Now will you notify the police about Mr. Starr?"

At that moment I disliked Julie Schuyler intensely. She had interfered with my every plan since she first cast herself into my arms in the cab and buried her head on my shoulder, and I vindictively hoped Fergusson might get off entirely free, and that the lady was young and pretty.

"Well?" said Miss Schuyler.

I glanced over my shoulder toward Nancy. She was looking at me with the light in her eyes that was so dear to me, and I could not bring myself to darken it.

"Oh, very well," I answered; "as you will. I should like nothing better than to find Starr and get to the bottom of this muddle."

I got my hat and coat, then turned defiantly to the girl.

"Will you come with me?" I inquired.

Julie Schuyler hesitated. She was plainly divided in her mind between suspicion of me, and fear of missing the return of Randy and his friend. In the end love, or perhaps jealousy, triumphed.

"I will wait here," she said, "with Nancy."

The latter clause showed me that Nancy was to be retained as a hostage to insure my safe return, and I felt a grudging admiration for her generalship.

Once safely outside the hotel, I paused to consider. Not for a moment did I intend to inform about Starr, yet I was quite as anxious as any one to discover his whereabouts. A motor stood at the curb, and inside I caught a glimpse of a large hat with a white feather. A man stood with his back toward me, talking to the chauffeur, his hand upon the door of the machine. As he turned his profile toward me I started, incredulous, for it was Starr himself.

I shouted his name, and hurried forward, but with one hasty glance in my direction he sprang into the motor, and it glided swiftly away.

I looked about for means of pursuit, and discovered a taxicab about to depart, having deposited fresh arrivals.

"Follow the motor," I called, and jumped inside.

It was an exciting chase that ensued, dodging street-cars and swinging round corners, but always keeping within half a block of the big red

car ahead—the car that contained Starr and the hat with a white feather.

Suddenly we stopped.

"Trouble ahead," announced my chauffeur.

And trouble there was, sure enough. An old gentleman, stout and apoplectic, was shaking his stick and gesticulating wildly. A policeman was busy taking names and addresses, while a hansom minus a wheel told its own story.

"The fat old party," commented my chauffeur, "was in the hansom. His hat got smashed, but he's lucky it was n't his head."

I got out and tried to force my way through the crowd toward the red car. Now was my opportunity to force Starr to explain.

"Fare!" called my driver, evidently fearing to lose sight of me.

I tossed him a bill, whether more or less than the allotted toll I did not stop to inquire, and plunged ahead desperately, for the red car now showed symptoms of motion. As my hand touched the door the wheels began to turn, and as I wrenched it open and sprang inside the machine was running swiftly and easily. Nevertheless, I landed on my knees, with hardly enough presence of mind remaining to close the door after me.

I expected to hear exclamations, and perhaps a stifled scream from the white feather. Judge, then, of my surprise when, the silence remaining unbroken, I scrambled to my feet and found myself alone in the tonneau.

Where I was going I did not, of course, know, and my first inclination was to call to the chauffeur to stop and let me out. Second thoughts, however, convinced me that this would be an unwise proceeding for many reasons, so I made myself comfortable and tried to plan a plausible excuse in case I was discovered when the car stopped.

Something white on the leather seat caught my eye, and I lifted it curiously. It proved to be a handkerchief, fine of texture, and delicately scented. One corner was knotted and seemed to contain something hard. I untied the knot, and the light of an arc lamp in the street showed me that I held in my hand a plain gold ring, new and shining, and much like the circlet I had so proudly placed on Nancy's finger the previous night.

But with a difference. The ring I held was bent and almost shapeless, as though crushed intentionally rather than the result of accident. I examined the handkerchief, but it had no mark except the letter "M" embroidered in the corner.

When I had seen this much the motor stopped. There was a deliberation about this pause that seemed to indicate we had reached our destination, and it appeared to me advisable to make a silent and

speedy exit, as explanations were inevitable if I should be discovered, and discovery was more than probable under any circumstances.

The chauffeur, however, did not even turn his head as I alighted, and had apparently received full instructions beforehand as to what was expected of him, for he simply went away without looking to the right or the left, or being any the wiser regarding his change of passengers.

I looked about and tried to get my bearings. It was surprising to discover that I had been deposited at a railway station, and I will confess that I felt a decided inclination to board the first train for New York; but the thought of Nancy restrained me. I went, however, into the general waiting-room and sat down to collect my thoughts and decide what next.

The usual throng of travellers streamed through the station and I watched them idly, wishing in a vague kind of way that Nancy and I were among them, starting on a perfectly orthodox honeymoon, with no complications to annoy us, and no one to be interested in our movements except ourselves. Was it possible, I wondered, that only three days had elapsed since I went out into the night to meet Nancy on the street corner? I felt that in that space of time I had lived tremendously, and I also felt that perhaps elopements were unwise when a little patient waiting might have straightened things out for us matrimonially after all.

But in an instant I forgot to moralize,—forgot everything, in fact, save that at the other end of the room I saw a face I knew. Not Starr indeed, of whom I was in search, but Fergusson, whom I had thought to be at the theatre with the unknown lady.

XI.

It was Fergusson—yes, even though he had a harassed look quite unnatural to that happy-go-lucky person, and carried in his hand a huge bandbox. It was the latter that caused me to doubt if it could indeed be true, for Randy absolutely declined to carry anything, unless it might be golf clubs or the most correct of suit-cases. Experience had made me wary. I did not hasten to my friend with outstretched hand, as I should once have done. He should have no opportunity to escape as Starr had done, so I determined to stalk my prey and approached cautiously from the rear. Perhaps if I returned Randy unharmed to Julie Schuyler, that red-haired damsel would allow me to depart with Nancy, untrammelled by her companionship.

So I drew near the unconscious Fergusson with care, and when I was within a stone's throw paused for another look. Randy seemed to have shrunk surprisingly; his coat humped up in the middle of his

back and he had a most unfamiliar narrow look across the shoulders. Also he clutched the handbox with almost feverish care, guarding it anxiously from any danger of crushing, and never for an instant allowing it to rest upon the floor. Altogether, he had the appearance of the head of a family who is subject to his better half and sorely afflicted by continual nagging.

Approaching quietly, still from the rear, I touched him on the shoulder.

"All right," he said, without even looking round; "I'm still here. I have n't even moved."

"Randy," I said, "what under the sun——"

If I had ever doubted Fergusson's affection for me, all doubts would have vanished then and there. His face lit up surprisingly, and he gripped my hand until the bones fairly cracked.

"Billy," he exclaimed, "you *are* a good old sort after all."

"Oh, yes, very likely," I returned. "But what do you mean by all this? And how are you going to explain things to Miss Julie Schuyler? She's waiting at the Fremont House this minute, and——"

Randy looked hurriedly over his shoulder.

"Here," he said, "just hold on to this blasted box one minute, will you? I've got something to show you."

Very foolishly I complied. Having known Randy long and intimately, I should have known better than to agree to anything he suggested. Nevertheless I took the box—in fact, he fairly forced it into my hands and stepped back hastily. It was then, and then only, that I realized we stood beside the elevator. I had a glimpse of Fergusson next the wire grating as it went down, and he seemed to be shouting something to me and pointing toward the staircase. I thought he meant me to join him below and started in that direction, when I felt my shoulder gripped from the rear, and saw the fingers of a white kid glove against the black of my coat.

"No, you don't," said a woman's voice, metallic and convincing. "Trying to run away from me again, were you? Oh, yes, you were, don't deny it—don't dare to deny it."

I did not deny anything. In fact, I did not speak at all, for it seemed to me I was up against it again, and that this was the last straw. I set the box upon the ground, with a feeling that without it I could be more manly and assertive.

Instantly there was a sharp exclamation.

"Pick it up," she commanded. "Have n't I told you never to drop it for a minute? Don't argue with me. Can't I have you arrested? Did n't you abduct me—an unprotected female in a cab alone and at night? Did n't——"

"Madam," I interrupted, turning desperately and facing her.

She collapsed into the nearest seat, speechless with mingled surprise and indignation. I saw a stout woman, past middle age, with an astonishingly youthful bonnet (now rakishly over one eye) and a velvet cloak badly in need of brushing. She was slowly turning purple in the face, and I believed was getting ready to scream, which was alarming indeed. I did not wish the attention of the police again drawn toward me, so I sat down beside her with my best and most persuasive manner.

"Believe me, madam," I said, "it is all right. Mr. Fergusson will soon return, and in the meantime he has entrusted you to my care."

"Entrusted!" she ejaculated. "*Entrusted!*"

I set the bandbox on the seat beside me and was about to speak when she broke in excitedly:

"Don't let it touch the floor. Hold it on your lap. On your lap, I tell you!"

I began to understand why Randy wore such a worried expression, as I obediently lifted the box and put it on my knees. It was surprisingly heavy, and I thought I felt something move.

"Would you mind," I ventured, "telling me where you and Mr. Fergusson were going? Since I represent him, perhaps I can be of use to you. My name is Leigh—Fergusson and I live together in New York."

"Birds of a feather," murmured she of the velvet cloak, and the inference was not complimentary.

"I should be glad to be of use," I continued. "We always feel perfectly free to ask each other to do little things. So when he found he had to leave suddenly he asked me——"

I paused uncomfortably, for she was looking at me with distinct unbelief in her eyes.

"Tarred with the same stick," she remarked.

Then she rose and shook out her skirts.

"Come," she remarked, "the gates are not open yet, but we might as well be in time."

I rose also, bandbox in hand.

"Where are we going?" I inquired.

"We are going back to New York. Once I get there safely, I shall consult the proper authorities how best to deal with this thing. It does n't matter to me whom I go with so long as I get there, and since your friend brought me here without volition of my own I have felt it but right he should pay all expenses and take me home. I have no money, nor have I sent home for any. And I expect every comfort when travelling that should be given a lady of my age."

Having thus stated her wishes, she looked at the clock.

"We have still twenty minutes before the gate opens," she remarked.

"Very well," I agreed; "but I should like to telegraph to my wife, who will expect me back at the hotel."

"Poor deluded young woman," said my companion. "Telegraph by all means, but I shall go with you."

"Would you mind telling me your name?" I hazarded. "Since we are to travel together, perhaps it would be more satisfactory."

"I am Miss Schuyler," she replied. "Miss Harriet Schuyler."

I dropped the handbox and stared incredulous.

"Miss Harriet Schuyler?" I ejaculated. "Aunt Harriet?"

"I don't know why you should call me 'Aunt,' young man," she returned, "but I *am* Miss Harriet Schuyler. Pick up my box."

Instead, I grasped her hands and squeezed them fervently. Never in my life had I been so glad to see any one, and I said so.

"Tell me about it," I begged. "Tell me all about it."

Aunt Harriet's story was briefly thus:

She had gone that stormy night to see her nephew, because she wanted to surprise him. I was quite familiar with all details of the expedition up to the time she disappeared into Starr's room, but from that point I listened with breathless attention.

"And when I went into that room," she solemnly stated, "I found it was not Bertie at all, but a vile impostor who had wormed his way into the affections of the family by false pretenses. I told him what I thought of him, and what I proposed to do about it."

I gathered that the interview had been unpleasant for Starr, but was careful to express no sympathy for him. Nor, indeed, did I feel any. We had all suffered from his escapade, and just retribution was but his due. Aunt Harriet said Starr had blustered at first and tried to insist that he was the missing Bertie, but she "soon brought him to his senses." He then became very meek and humble, and proposed that he should go home with her and confess to Mrs. Schuyler-Smythe what he had done. Had she but known that when Starr is apparently most amenable to reason he is always to be distrusted, perhaps she would not have followed him so confidently downstairs.

"He brought up his friend, Mr. Fergusson," she said, "and they both seemed to be such polite young fellows that I felt downright sorry I must expose him to Mildred, but of course I could not let her marry an impostor."

"Of course not," I conceded.

"We got in a cab," she continued; "Mr. Fergusson came inside with me, and Mr. Starr went on the box. After a while we stopped and I saw we were on the dock. They told me there was congestion of traffic owing to a fire, and it would be better for us to go round by ferry. The next thing I knew, we were off. I sat and waited for a while, but nobody came near me. We seemed to be a long time getting round,

but I had heard ferries were slow boats, although I did not know very much about them. It seemed to me ages passed, then Mr. Fergusson came in, looking perfectly distracted and using language that was a disgrace. He said we were aboard the steamer bound for Boston."

Aunt Harriet here swallowed several times audibly. It seemed as though her feelings were getting the better of her. Indeed, she was so absorbed in her recital that she did not notice the New York train was called, and I did not bring it to her attention.

"We had a most unpleasant trip," she resumed, "for I was very ill, and your friend was entirely without sympathy. Strange to say, there was a good stateroom reserved for me, but Mr. Fergusson had to get what sleep he could in the cabin. We arrived in Boston and went to the Fremont House. I had no money, my black bag having been stolen, and he said he had but very little. I did not believe him, of course, and insisted upon the best hotel. I demanded that he should take me back to New York, and threatened to call in the police. In short, I have made it as disagreeable for him as I possibly could."

I remembered Randy's harassed expression, and thought it probable that the trip had been anything but agreeable for him.

"And this?" I inquired, lifting the bandbox.

"Oh, that's Adolphus, my Manx cat. I had him under my cloak, you know. He always goes everywhere with me. The stewardess on the boat gave me the box for him. Poor dear, he does dislike to travel, and so do I."

Finally I prevailed upon Miss Schuyler to return to the Fremont House, and on the way back I told her my own story. Also Randy's—or as much of it as I could imagine. I also prepared her mind to meet Julie Schuyler, and thought it probable that the meeting might be somewhat like Greek encountering Greek. To my surprise, Aunt Harriet simply chuckled when I reached the point in my story where her niece had forced us to come to Boston.

"Going to look up her lover, was she?" she said. "Red-haired little minx—a chip of the old block, Mr. Leigh, and bound to gain her own ends by some means or other."

They were all gathered in the lobby when we reached the house—Nancy, Julie Schuyler, and Fergusson, plainly expecting us. Randy rushed forward and relieved me of the bandbox.

"Allow me," he cried. "I feel lots more at home with it than without it."

"Julie Schuyler," remarked Aunt Harriet, "come right upstairs and tell me all about it."

Fergusson told us his story as soon as they disappeared. He said Starr had insisted upon getting into the cab which he (Randy) had brought Nancy back in, and which was to convey his lady and himself

to church. Neither Starr nor Fergusson would give up the cab, and finally they agreed to take Aunt Harriet in also, and decide what to do with her en route.

"You see," remarked Randy, "I felt sorry for Starr. He and Mildred were going to be married that night also, and here was Aunt Harriet butting in and spoiling everything. Starr had engaged passage for Boston, and we thought it would be a master stroke of genius to put the old lady aboard in his place and simply ship her off. She could n't get back under three days, and by that time everything would be all right. Of course it was not usual for the steamer to sail in the evening, but for some reason or other it went at that time and everything seemed propitious."

"Yes," said Nancy; "but why did you go with her?"

Fergusson said he had not had the least idea of going, but that Starr requested him to explain that the stateroom reserved for Mr. and Mrs. Starr would be transferred to Miss Schuyler, for they wished things to be as comfortable as possible. While he was arranging it Starr quietly got off and the steamer started. The rest we knew.

"We arranged to leave Boston last night," he concluded, "but I had n't mentioned it to the clerk, because I had not very much money with me and he had already refused my check. I was going to send it when I got home. That was why I wanted five hundred dollars, because Aunt Harriet was a very expensive companion, and I never knew what was going to turn up."

He sat silent for a time, apparently lost in retrospection.

"I've had a parrot-and-monkey time," remarked Randy briefly. "That blanked cat!"

XII.

WE all went home the next morning, and Randy and I took turns in carrying the bandbox. Aunt Harriet had subsided into a rather genial old lady, with a keen appreciation of a joke. Although she insisted she had many things to settle with Starr, we felt that she might in time be propitiated, and all united in making much of her.

It was agreed that we should go to our old rooms and there procure a minister, in order that Randy might be married without further delay.

"For," said Aunt Harriet, with a twinkle in her eye, "he ought to have some reward. I made his life pretty miserable, I can tell you."

At a public telephone booth in Jersey City Station Aunt Harriet paused.

"I might just as well telephone to police headquarters that I'm all right," she remarked. "What idiots you were to imagine I

could n't take care of myself anyhow! I suppose that unfortunate Mr. Casey will be glad to get out and tell you all his opinion of you."

We laughed rather faintly. I, for one, had no curiosity to hear Casey's opinion, although I did not doubt he would be glad to express it.

We went gaily enough up the long flights of stairs, but at the top Nancy paused, her hand on the door of our living-room.

"I hear voices," she said.

We all listened,—Aunt Harriet most intently.

"Yes, and I know them, too," she said grimly, and, flinging open the door, marched in, while we trailed along after her in single file, somewhat suggesting the tail to a comet.

I don't really think I was surprised when Starr rose and greeted me. My capacity for surprises had been taxed to the utmost, so I merely looked inquiringly at a hat with a long white feather that lay on the table.

"Oh, yes," said Starr; "that belongs to Mrs. Starr. I'll present you. Mildred!"

But Mildred did not answer, for she was being pressed to Aunt Harriet's velvet bosom and speech was impossible. I looked again at Starr and was surprised to see that he was in evening dress, slightly the worse for wear and with a wilted carnation in his buttonhole. I determined that explanations were in order.

"Starr," I said severely, "last night you were in Boston."

"So were you," he retorted. Starr was seldom at a loss for an appropriate answer, but I did not think this remark worth noticing. Mildred here broke into the conversation, her arms around Aunt Harriet and their cheeks pressed together.

"Oh dear!" she said, "can you ever forgive us? We had to do it, Aunty, indeed we did, for Stanford and I just could n't wait any longer to be married, and you would have interfered. He told me all about it, and I knew he was n't the Bertie Starr you thought him. So I did n't marry any impostor after all. And, dearest Aunty, we went to Boston right away by train to meet you; we were at the dock in a hack when the boat came in, but Stanford said Mr. Fergusson was taking such good care of you that we were not needed. Thank you so much, Mr. Fergusson, for all your trouble."

She smiled graciously, and Randy smiled also; he never could resist the blandishments of a pretty woman, and Mildred was certainly very lovely as she tried to explain the outrageous performance of her newly acquired husband.

"I'm so sorry about everything," she continued, including us all in her apologetic glance. "You see, we were so happy together, we never thought about anybody else. And of course we did n't read the newspapers on our honeymoon—who does? At the hotel we registered

as Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Smith, for Stanford said he thought it would be sweet to be lost to the world for just a few days, and I thought so too. But we never for a minute forgot you, dear Aunt Harriet, did we, Stanford?"

"Not for an instant," he corroborated solemnly.

"And last night, Aunty, for the first time, Stanford read a newspaper and he saw there was a warrant out for his arrest for killing you—just think how horrid! So we consulted about it and I said we ought to go right away to the Fremont House and get you in the flesh. We went there instead of going to the theatre as we had expected, and Stanford got out and looked through the crack of the door, watching for you and Mr. Fergusson."

"I saw him," remarked Julie Schuyler, "and oh! how I wanted to get hold of him!"

"We had hired a red touring-car for a week," resumed Mildred, "and I sat in it and waited while he watched. Suddenly he rushed out and said he was being followed."

"It was you, Billy," interpolated Starr, "and there was blood in your eye. I did n't trust you. So I shouted to the chauffeur to take us to the station and leave us there, but we got caught in that crush. I jumped out and Mildred came too, and we went the rest of the way on foot. Just as we got to the station the New York train was called and we decided to come home. That's all."

"Not quite all," said Mildred. "A dreadful thing happened to me. I lost my wedding ring."

"I'll get you another," promised Starr. But his bride shook her head sadly.

"It won't be the same at all. No other could ever take its place. You see," she explained, turning to Nancy for sympathy, "it was too large and I dropped it. Stanford stepped on it and mashed it out of shape, so we tied it in the corner of my handkerchief until we could go to a jeweller and get it straightened out. Now I've lost handkerchief and all. I'm sure it's a bad omen, and I'm very unhappy about it."

I fumbled in my pocket and produced the handkerchief I had found in the motor the previous night, with its little crushed ring in the corner.

"Cheer up," I said; "you won't be troubled by any omens at all," and handed it to her with a flourish.

While we were all talking at once, each going over different experiences and much inclined to view everything in the light of a huge joke, now it was safely over, a shadow darkened the doorway, and Nancy looked up. She gave a little shriek and stopped abruptly, while Julie Schuyler laughed outright.

It was Casey in the door—Casey, grim and forbidding of aspect, his

hair even more rampant than usual, and bearing in his hands the black bag Aunt Harriet had left in her cab, and which had been the root of all evil as far as I was concerned.

"I'm afraid I intrude," said Casey, with austere sarcasm.

He got no further, for as though moved by a simultaneous impulse Starr and Fergusson rushed to him and seized his hands.

"You'll make your home with us, old fellow," cried Starr; "we have it all settled."

Randy moved Casey's unresponsive left arm up and down as though vigorously pumping.

"No, indeed," he said; "old Casey belongs to us—eh, Julie?"

I woke to the plan of campaign and approved it.

"Where do *we* come in?" I interrupted, taking possession of his thumb, which was the only spot available just then. "One of the first things we decided was that Casey belonged to us."

"It's all very well——" began Casey, unappeased, but got no further, for the girls pushed us one side and bore him resisting but helpless to the couch. They relieved him of his hat and coat (or rather *my* hat and coat that I had bequeathed him), and whenever he tried to speak they all laughed and talked together. They fluttered round him like so many gaily plumaged birds, and after a struggle to maintain his dignity Casey capitulated and laughed.

"Tell me all about it," he said.

We told him in sections, sometimes all talking at once, and sometimes allowing Aunt Harriet or Fergusson to have the floor undisturbed, for it was generally conceded that their experience had been the most interesting.

"And to-night," said Fergusson, "we are going to have a real wedding here, Casey, and you shall be best man."

Casey rose and brought out a dusty bottle or so from his pantry under the table.

"Randy," he said, "go out and get some lemons. I'll make the punch."

Mildred returned the black bag to Aunt Harriet, and the girls professed much curiosity to see inside.

"For," said Julie Schuyler, "because of that bag, Aunty, I spent a night in the police station. What in the world did you carry in it beside money?"

Aunt Harriet drew forth a package and opened it. Some wilted green sprigs fell to the floor, and she regarded them ruefully.

"It was catnip for Adolphus," she said, "but he never even got a smell of it, poor dear, and now it's withered up to nothing."

Well, we had what Nancy called a real proper wedding, and Casey

was best man and made the punch. Everybody kissed the bride, and when it came to my turn she laughed a little shyly.

"I was a horrid little cat to you," she said. "Please forget it."

"Very well, Julia Smith," I returned, "provided you never allow your husband to write verses."

We sent for Mrs. Stubbs, and when she appeared in our midst we cheered her and drank her health, which embarrassed her so much she forgot to ask inconvenient questions. No one was more merry or more thoroughly enjoyed herself than Aunt Harriet.

"I never heard of such a thing," she kept repeating. "Find a wife for Mr. Casey indeed, and just look here at the six of you!"

Mildred approached her and I heard an anxious whisper.

"Never you mind, dear," was the answer; "I'll attend to your mother. Welcome at home again? Well, I should think so—you and Julie too. Don't you worry."

We did n't any of us worry over anything, and Randy apologized very handsomely for borrowing my ring. He would return it next day, he said, and actually did so.

Then Casey made a speech. He said that as a matter of fact we all owed our present state of bliss to him alone, for if he had not decided to get married we should have remained unhappy bachelors. He ventured the suggestion that when next we prepared to elope it would be advisable to confide in one another, but of course we must do as we thought best about such matters. He had not presumed to inquire what our plans for the future were, nor had we mentioned them. He much appreciated our keen desire to have him form part of our households, but as said households seemed to him rather sketchy and unsubstantial he believed he would continue to patronize Mrs. Stubbs's top floor, where, he begged to assure us, we should always be welcome. And now, as we were all otherwise engaged, he wanted to say that it would give him great pleasure to return Miss Harriet Schuyler to her sister's house, and hoped he would be allowed to carry the bandbox and thus make the acquaintance of Adolphus. He declined, however, to enter a cab.

Nancy and I went down to the hall door with them and watched Casey and Aunt Harriet disappear around the corner. Her little hands were clasped around my arm, and we lingered there alone a few moments before rejoining the merry party upstairs.

"Is n't it wonderful?" she said softly. "Just think, Billy, you and I are married. I have n't had time to realize it before."

"All the time for years to come just to be happy in," I said, but Nancy shook her head.

"No, dear," she said, "there will be clouds as well as sunshine. But if we find the silver lining we shan't mind, shall we?"

"We'll always remember it is there, Nancy."

We stood silently a moment, then Nancy spoke very gently.

"To-morrow we will go to Philadelphia and see Daddy. I've telegraphed, for I know he wants me. He'll like to have us live with him."

"Dear," I said, "we'll go and see him by all means, but we'll come back here where my work is. I want my wife all to myself, Nancy."

"Men are so foolish," said Nancy Leigh.



WHEN TO TELL THE PARENTS

By Thomas L. Masson

A GREAT question confronts us; a question solemn with portentous importance. We may not shirk it. It lies at the basis of all home life.

Many children, under a mistaken sense of their own obligations, go on year after year, keeping from their parents certain facts which if the parents were frankly told would save them from incalculable consequences.

Parents are already suffering immeasurably from this ignorance. They go on heedlessly, without regard for the fatal consequences, until some day they wake up to find that it is too late.

Children should be made aware of this. They should draw their parents frankly to their side, and tell them all.

Children, do not hesitate! Remember that it is your sacred duty, a duty which you may not hope to evade. More parents suffer from this criminal hesitancy on the part of children than from any other cause. They go on year after year assuming that the children are in ignorance, until some day they are undeceived.

We urge all modern children, therefore, not to wait. Just as soon as you can get your parents alone, tell them the old, old story. Tell them that although you are somewhat younger than they are, you already know it all. Tell them not to make any attempt to make things plain to you, as the first thing you did when you were old enough to talk, was to find out all about it for yourself.

It will be a great shock to them at first of course, to discover that you know so much. But they will get over it. And when they want to learn anything really new, you will discover that they will get into the habit of coming to you for it.

A PATCHWORK QUILT OF HUMANITY

By Day Allen Willey

VARIEGATED as a patchwork quilt is the humanity of the State which has added the latest star to the flag. It is a patchwork which could be put together only in such a country as ours, with its jumble of white nationalities; but with the white are associated the black and red, while the tints where white and red and black and red have blended are to be seen on the streets and along the rural ways of Oklahoma. When its representatives in Congress took their seats in the big building on Capitol Hill, among them were "boomers," "sooners," and their descendants. The squaw man has had "Hon." prefixed to his name, and his wife and daughters indeed give local color to those pan-American social events, the White House receptions.

The rest of the world knows more about Oklahoma's past than its present, because we have read of it in the days when the town marshal sometimes kept the peace by dropping a man at each shot; the days when they started a town on the prairie and finished it between breakfast and supper, even to the smith-shop, school, and faro-bank. But the world changes rapidly out here—possibly faster than anywhere else, even in this high pressure country of ours. Oklahoma has taken on a new life. Even five years ago the territory after which it is named was far more of a waste place—a happy hunting ground—than to-day.

It is not strange that Oklahoma has grown with a rush, for so it was created. Scattered here and there on its farms, behind the counters of its stores, in the offices of its banks, is many a man whose eyes glint as he tells of that April day in 1889 when the prize was to the swiftest, the day when fifty thousand human beings were massed on the frontier awaiting the gunshot which was to start them like so many hounds in their race for the land. Some had put their last dollar into the fleetest horse they could buy, well knowing the value of getting there first. But there were the hack, the pony, even the humble mule, each with its

eager rider. Boomers who had been living in their canvas wagons for months on the edge of the promised land grasped the reins, ready at the signal to bring into it their entire outfit, from the teakettle to the last baby. And down in the "draws" and gulches, concealed amid the timber, were hundreds of others who had stolen over the border by night and had skulked under cover like animals in their efforts to elude the vigilant soldiery.

Before the smoke of the gunshot cleared away, the leaders in the "Oklahoma Run," as it is known to this day, had disappeared from sight. Straggling out over mile after mile of prairie and valley, the multitude of home-seekers followed, gradually spreading over more and more area as each individual or family sought some particular goal. They knew the choicer sites, where pure water was abundant, the soil more fertile, and the woodland afforded shade and fuel. As fast as the lucky adventurer reached one of these spots, quickly did he drive a stake into the earth and nail his claim board, if he did not plant a flag or pitch a tent. Often that day and the next and the next was heard the crack of the rifle. Many a rider about to claim his prize fell in his tracks, and the man with the gun stepped in. All this was nearly twenty years ago, yet to-day there are families living within a stone's throw of each other who neither speak nor look as they meet. They have land feuds in Oklahoma dating back to the Run of '89, when two claim boards were put up on the same home-site, and the holders built their houses side by side, each refusing to give down.



As this human tidal wave swept over plain and hill and through valley, eddies from it gathered at two points. Before sundown of the first day they had been dubbed cities, and with good reason. Each had its hundreds of tents. The sounds of the saw and hammer were heard where the wooden shacks were rising from the ground. Thus in the same day were born Guthrie and Oklahoma City, now two of the largest communities in the new State. This is not all the story of the Run by any means, but enough for a conception of the pioneers who carried their rough and ready civilization into Oklahoma. Among the fifty thousand was plenty of human flotsam and jetsam which had drifted eastward as well as westward—men with a price on their heads, gamblers, luckless prospectors, outlaws. It was well that the town marshals shot first and talked afterwards. But along came farmers from as far east as Illinois. Kansas, then in the throes of crop failure, was deserted by thousands of its settlers, who turned their faces to the south. Since then the movement of home-seekers has been from so many parts of the West and South that Oklahoma is to-day the home

of men and women who have come here from twenty other States and Territories in the hope of winning fortune's smile.

When the Oklahomans asked to be counted as citizens of a State, and it was suggested that they "double up" with their neighbor, protests poured into Washington from every part of the Territory. Vigorous were the speeches of their representatives. The rest of the country was surprised. Why this feeling against the people to the eastward? Senators and Congressmen heard some stories in explanation that resembled chapters in a yellow-backed novel. In the earlier days the Indian Territory had been a refuge for the thief, murderer, and stage robber. Criminals hunted by the Oklahoma marshals invariably headed for it. If they crossed the Canadian river they usually found a safe asylum either alone in the wilderness or with other outlaws from justice. But the territory to-day belies the reputation it was so unfortunate as to get from being situated where it became a human dumping-ground. It contains a civilization which has no parallel elsewhere.



When the Five Nations were persuaded to cross the Mississippi, the "Great Father" at Washington signed a paper by which this region was given them as long as "grass grows and water runs" upon its surface. It was theirs for all time, said the white people. So the Cherokees, Creeks, Chickasaws, Choctaws, Seminoles, and the remnants of a few other tribes entered its borders. Here they lived the old life. Buffalo and other game were plentiful. There were fish in the streams. While the men hunted, fished, and idled the rest of the time, the squaws planted a little corn and did the usual drudgery of the Indian woman. Game became scarce, but the lands remained untilled, and the coal lay in the hills awaiting the miner's pick. The food supply grew scantier, but still the only harvest was from the little corn patches. Then the Indians realized that there was no law which prevented the white man from doing their work. He had already cast longing eyes on the fertile plain and valley and knew the riches hidden in the hill-side. The tribal councils removed the barriers, and he came in first by the hundreds, then by the thousands. All had to have some pretext to remain, so they bought permits to trade in the Indian towns and to peddle clothing and trinkets about the country. As these licenses meant so much money to the Indians, the councils issued them for all sorts of purposes, provided the applicant paid enough. The best lands in the territory were soon dotted with the dugout and sod house of the white tenant, later to be replaced with modern dwellings. He raised corn, wheat, oats, cotton. Fat cattle grazed in his pastures. At the end of the year he paid his red landlord money or in shares of the

harvest, taking care to keep a generous portion for himself. The expert had discovered the great coal-beds in the country of the Choctaws and Chickasaws, and finally these were opened, the miners paying the Indian owners so much money for every ton. The drill brought oil to the surface, and the white man secured this also on a royalty.

The lords of the territory were content to let the white man work on its farms, in its mines and forests, provided they had nothing to do but take their share of his product. Absolutely in control, they could tell him to stay or go as they pleased—but he had come to stay. Many of the tenant farmers were young men pleasing to the eye of the Indian women. Among the teachers in the schools provided by the government were others, graduates of Eastern colleges and academies. We must remember that the Five Nations include much of the Indian aristocracy of the country, ranking with the Sioux and the Yakimas in physique and intelligence. The tribal councils, with the exception of the Seminoles, gave permission to blend the white and the red by marriage. Such was the origin of the real squaw man. We are apt to regard him as a bit of the white scum in the border town, who has sunk too low to consort with his own color and has taken up with some Indian or half-breed, deserting her when the fancy seizes him. True it is that the outlaws driven across the Canadian border found negresses among the former slaves of the Five Nations, female pariahs like themselves, and dissolute Indian women. With these they lived, occasionally making a foray from their haunts for the purposes of robbery, perhaps murder. Few of them can be classed as squaw men, however, for the reason that so few were ever married, and only by such a contract with an Indian had they the right to this title. The two thousand squaw men who to-day live in the part of Oklahoma formerly known as Indian Territory are not only among its wealthy inhabitants, but are among its best known politicians. They have really governed the country in recent years far more than the natives themselves, and it must be said that it owes much of its progress to their efforts.



They have a vocabulary of their own in Oklahoma, for enough of the native words are heard to make it both rhythmic and musical. The name of the State falls pleasantly upon the ear. Translated into English, it is truly appropriate, for it means "The Beautiful Land." Those who have taken possession of it have had the good taste to retain many of the tribal titles, and as the tourist is whirled through the country the sign-boards on the ornate depots catch his eye with such words as Vinita, Tulsa, Ponca, Washita, Watonga, Toncawa, Tahlequah, Nowata. Here is where Oklahoma differs from other parts of the

West: the invasion of the white man has not destroyed the Indian nomenclature, although he has altered the landscape from the picturesqueness of the wild to a panorama of agriculture.

Some of the scenes which attract the eye are peculiar to Oklahoma. The prairie schooner creaks along pulled by its two or three horses. No wonder they plod slowly with heads low. Their fodder comes mostly from what they crop by the way-side during the halts, and you can count every rib in their bodies. Inside the wagon with the gaunt, hollow-eyed woman are a half-dozen children of all years, from the babe in her arms to the youngster of ten or so—but every one bearing the stamp which hunger and poverty put on little humanity especially. The wagon may carry two or three pieces of battered furniture besides a mattress and a few dishes—all that is left of the family belongings, or if the “Nester,” as they term him, has recently reached the country, he may have another wagon behind to carry his outfit. When not on the road, these travellers are usually huddled in some handy clump of trees, where wood and water can be had for nothing and there is a bit of grass for the horses. The Nester is the Wandering Jew of Oklahoma. Ever looking for a home-site, he never finds it, and after a time the *wanderlust* gets such a hold on him that he could not settle down in any spot. He lives on wheels, getting his food by begging and stealing. Under the canvas of the wagon children are born and here death comes. His burial place is by the way-side.



The “schooner” has long been given up by the true settlers. They have no time to waste, and move their things to the new place by the carload. Even the famous Santa Fé trail has been abandoned, and the railroad named after it now brings the tide of civilization into the country adjacent to it; but so rapidly has the way of steel been laid that the whistle of the locomotive is heard in all but a few counties in the new State, for there are six thousand miles of railway in its borders. But along the highway goes the big wagon heaped with its wheat or corn, or perhaps “garden truck” to be sold in the market town for cash. It does not come back empty. Open the boxes or the covers of the bundles and you may be surprised at the luxuries as well as the necessities they contain—not only the tea, sugar, coffee, and flour, but a clock for the mantel, a silk dress-pattern that mother or “the girls” ordered from St. Louis or Kansas City, packages of flower-seeds for the door-yard, perhaps a parlor carpet.

If you should be in the grain-belt you realize what farming means out here. The man from the older land, who tills his hundred acres or so and has his corn lot of ten or twenty acres, is very properly

amazed when he sees the grain waving on a field of a thousand acres. And when the harvest days are at hand and the huge mowers and reapers sweep majestically over the field, cutting and gathering up the stalks, and the busy threshers are separating the kernels with their agile mechanical fingers, the farmer does not stop to bind or bale the straw, but leaves it on the field in little mountains. Often he does not take the stalk from the ground, but cuts off the top with his "header," which "slices" thirty and forty acres a day as its string of a dozen or a score of sturdy horses pulls it through this sea of yellow. On some of the larger ranches, as the Oklahomans prefer to call their farms, they have put the great traction engine at work to draw the cultivators and the harvesters. This giant with muscles of steam and bone of steel will do as much as fifty or a hundred horses.

Like Georgia, Oklahoma is a "Land of Cotton." You can tell the dividing line between the "plantation" of the Southerner who has drifted up here in the uttermost corner of Dixie, and the "ranch" of his neighbor from Iowa or Kansas. The man who turns his r's into h's as he drawls out his words with the soft Southern accent, has the same kind of soil seeded to cotton which the Westerner has planted in corn. At first he did it out of sentiment. The sight of the open bolls with their snowy fleece brought to memory a picture of his homeland. When he found that here the cotton-plant grew luxuriantly, he raised it from motives of business as well. But our panorama is not only of the grain-shoots and the corn-stalks and the cotton-shrub. There are the peach-trees bending with their fruit, the big red apple, and watermelons that would tempt the most virtuous colored deacon to break the eighth commandment.



The traveller on the Pacific Coast and through the Oregon Country expects to find the cities and towns of Oklahoma up to the times in buildings and civic improvements. The Eastern man may be surprised to find a porcelain tub, lace curtains, and electric bells in his room at the hostelry, the streets paved with asphalt and brilliantly lighted, but the larger communities have these conveniences. The trolley-car is a familiar sight. As it whizzes by the homes, big and little, their resemblance to the architecture of the Middle West is striking—the peaked roof, the broad veranda with its lattice-work half hidden by the vine and shrub, the numerous bay windows—for most of the houses are frame and can be varied in design at small expense.

In the equipment and decoration of the home the Indian Territory is ahead of its sister for the reason that here, despite its name, the white man has longer resided, and his influence is noted everywhere.

In Tahlequah, the old-time capital, or the newer and larger towns of Muskogee and Ardmore, you may think yourself in Ohio, Indiana, or Illinois. The men or women who pass along the street may have Choctaw or Chickasaw blood in their veins, but the only sign of the Indian is the darker tint of the features and possibly the hair. Their dress and bearing are of civilization. Not a trace of the guttural is heard when they speak. The "blanket Indian" is unknown, and each community has its social set as sharply defined as if it were Washington or Boston. And it needs more than money to "break into" society. Education counts for something, but personality counts for more. On the visiting list of the doctor's wife will be the consorts of the professional men, of course, but sometimes the list may include the wife of the undertaker and the better half of some wealthy merchant—if she is cultured, can talk well, and plays a good hand at "bridge." To this society blood is no bar except that of the negro, but as none of the Five Nations, except the few Seminoles, have mingled with the black, the mixed race is almost entirely of the red and white. As the chiefs and governors of each nation have always been Indians or squaw men and are landlords of the old territory, it is only natural that they and their descendants should be classed amid this unique aristocracy.



Before the Civil War the Five Nations had a school system which included seminaries for "finishing" girls and boys. As they intermarried with the whites, the desire of the Indian mothers to educate their children like those of the pale-faces increased and more schools were established, until to-day the Indian Territory itself has over six hundred government and other institutions, including a score of boarding-schools. Many of the prairie maidens have had the final polish put on outside of their home-land, a polish which embraced such accomplishments as music, drawing, and the polite languages. Out of the hundred thousand tribesmen and their descendants in the new State, nearly one-half have the blend of red and white in their blood. They include many a girl and young matron who is at ease whether a guest in the drawing-room or playing the part of hostess, and may be as entertaining and as cultured as the average white woman met in the social circles of the East. Where they have gone into the world, forced to earn a livelihood, their education has enabled these blended Americans to become teachers in the schools and seminaries. They have their classes in vocal and instrumental music. They design millinery, make dresses, are stenographers and bookkeepers. One miss just in her twenties edited a magazine for several years which circulated in the West—a periodical to which literature, both poetry and prose,

was contributed by writers of mixed blood. The *Twin Territories* only suspended publication when its editor was sought in marriage. Her father was a Swede and her mother a Cherokee.

Amid the crowd awaiting the gunshot on that day in '89 was a smooth-faced young fellow mounted on a horse whose clean limbs and short ears betokened racing blood. He was a thoroughbred from the Blue Grass country, and when the Run was on, put his rider into the front line of the speeding fortune-hunters. Joe Miller had a goal, and he headed straight for it, but the course was forty miles long. The Kentucky steed brought him first to the Arkansas River valley, but dropped dead from exhaustion. On the spot where his horse had fallen, Miller located his claim, and as soon as his father and brothers joined him, land was broken. To-day around the monument placed where the horse dropped dead is a ranch which covers nearly one hundred and forty square miles. Within its borders are three thriving towns of white people. It costs a hundred thousand dollars a year to run "Ranch 101," for it needs from three hundred to five hundred hands continually, and seventy-five thousand of its acres are leased from a thousand Indian landlords, but the chances of the harvest make the game worth while.

The achievement of the "Miller boys" is perhaps the "biggest thing" in Oklahoma, but we have merely cited it to show what energy and determination will accomplish when stimulated by necessity. Like the majority of others who have made the new State what it is to-day, they forced fortune's favor by their own efforts. The soil, the mine, the forest, will not yield their wealth without labor, and Oklahoma is not more favored in natural resources than many other sections of the country. As we have stated, the original owners secured little of these resources. Had the white man not put his all within its borders, he might also have failed, but to the majority of them failure meant ruin. Thus they were nerved to do their utmost. And so they have created life of the sort that is real, earnest, optimistic, where the red man has merely existed.



WHAT HAPPENED TO FATHER

By Mary Roberts Rinehart

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IT seems queer we never suspected anything. When we told Uncle James about it, he said that father had been working too hard at his History of the Ptolemies, and that financial anxiety drove plenty of men out of their heads. (He went through father's desk that afternoon and found the quarterly bills.)

We never missed him until an hour before the wedding. We had been in a frantic flurry for two weeks, and then at the last minute Fred and Mortimer (Fred was the bride) decided to go to Palm Beach by automobile, and mother—and father—bought them a car. It was rather a jump from the case of silver they had ordered, but mother said it was imperative, and so father sold some stock. He was away a good bit the week that followed. Then, one evening, he came home in great excitement and called me into the study.

"Tommy," he began nervously (my name is Thomasina and Fred's is Fredericka, named for the grandfathers)—"Tommy, what is this about Carlton Bayne?"

"Nothing new," I replied, "if you mean his wanting to marry me. I hope he has n't been fussing you about it, dad."

"Oh, no—quite the contrary," father protested. "I—he is a man of considerable personality, Tommy."

"Yes, and all of it unpleasant." Father was watching me with his near-sighted eyes, and—I'm a goose about father anyhow. All at once it occurred to me that he was in deadly earnest.

"He is a man of affairs——"

"Other people's," I assented, still trying to be flippant. "Spit it out, father. Do you want me to marry Carlton Bayne?"

"Not against your will, Tommy," he said gently. But he did, and I knew it. Anyhow, I was tired of bills, and Carlton's colossal conceit was balanced by his income, and everybody knew that Dawson Hale would never have a penny.

That was the last talk I had with father. The night of the rehearsal we gave a dinner to the wedding party, and mother announced my

engagement. Father went to bed about midnight, and when mother went up at two he was still awake. She recalled afterwards that he had said he could n't sleep because Tommy had looked unhappy, and he wondered if the stories about Carlton Bayne were true.

Nobody missed him the next day until an hour before the ceremony. William, the second man, who looks after father—William said he had laid his clothes out at nine o'clock. But he was n't in his dressing-room, or anywhere in the house, and the clothes were untouched. Some of the bridesmaids had already arrived, and in a half-hour we would have to start for the church. Fred was having her veil pinned when mother told her. Fred has all kinds of poise, and she was dictating thank-you-mams to the visiting social secretary up to the last minute.

"Buried up to his nose in Egyptian literature somewhere," she said scornfully. "Uncle James will do. He's taller anyhow. Pin the veil a little higher on this side, please."

So I flew downstairs and found Uncle James, and he said he was n't at all nervous. And then he got wobbly and had to have a glass of sherry. Just outside the library I ran into Dawson Hale. He was staring into the drawing-room very soberly, and he looked exceedingly nice. There is something about Dawson's chin that fascinates me. Eminently bad match that it would be, I had always felt that some day I should marry that chin. It gave me a queer start to realize that now I never should, and that I was going to go through life in imported gowns and special cars, with somebody else. I tried to pass Dawson, but he saw me at once.

"Looks—bridey and nice, does n't it?" I said valiantly, glancing at the drawing-room, all crash and roses.

"Very," he assented, staring at me. "I am speechless over you, Tommy,—which is the effect all that tulle is to produce, I suppose." Then, suddenly: "Where's your ring? You are n't wearing it, Tommy."

"I can't, under my glove," I explained. "It's too large."

But Dawson caught me by the arm and pushed me into the drawing-room and closed the door. "I don't believe you," he said. "If you'll tell me who or what is making you do this, I'll—— Tommy, do you want to marry that bounder?"

"I don't want to marry anybody," I replied wearily. "But I'm tired to death of bills, and I've got to pay my milliner and my dress-maker, and Fred's trousseau's been fabulous——"

"Of course," he muttered between his teeth. "And so you——"

"And so I'm going to be exceedingly prosperous," I said flippantly, and stooped to tie my slipper.

"You don't fool me, Tommy," Dawson said gloomily. "There's

nothing the matter with your slipper. If you want a handkerchief, here's mine."

"If it gets *too* bad," I said from the handkerchief, "I can get a divorce. It *has* been done."

"It won't be any use trying to come it over me, then," he retorted savagely. "I won't have you." The florist's men came in then, and Dawson looked at the canopy of orchids where Fred—and Mortimer, of course—were to stand.

"The day you stand under a roof like that, Tommy," he threatened in an undertone, "they can tie a bunch of them to my door-bell. Where's your mother?"

By that time the bridesmaids were coming downstairs to the carriages. Fred followed, with two maids holding up her gown, and mother came last. She had told about father's sprained ankle so circumstantially and often that she believed it herself. Dawson waited for her in the hall, and when he asked if father was there, she told it all over to him. It struck me that he looked surprised.

"I'm glad it is only a sprained ankle," he said, when she had finished. "I don't mind saying I was afraid he'd never get back at all. Then I'm late with the note." He was fishing in his pocket. "I'm awfully sorry, but the truth is, I forgot it. If there is anything Mortimer *did* n't leave for me at the last minute, I don't know it."

Mother had got her voice by that time. "He has *not* come back, Dawson," she said, in a burst of self-pity. "I never believed that Mr. Bradberry would treat the sacred occasion of his daughter's marriage with such lightness." Just then Dawson found the note.

Mother tore it open, and for all her dignity her hands were shaking. She glanced at it, and then she passed it to Uncle James. "Read it, James," she said, looking very queer. "It must be because I have n't my glasses."

Uncle James read it out in his solemnest manner. This was father's note:

A cancels a and B cancels b
C cancels c and D cancels d
Marriage, love, frendship, hate.
Milly loves Billy, and Billy loves Kate.

Uncle James turned it over and looked at the back, but there was nothing more. It was father's writing, without a doubt, and there was the envelope addressed to mother. And, of course, father's name is William, although I never heard him called Billy. But the queer part was that mother's name is Eliza!

"Give it to me!" mother demanded fiercely, and crushed it up in her hand. "The man's crazy—or"—with awful calmness—"perhaps this is your idea of a jest, Dawson."

"God forbid!" Dawson said with fervor. "He gave it to me two hours ago himself. Said he forgot to leave it. I wanted him to let me get a chauffeur, but when I had backed him off the pavement, he said he had the hang of the thing now, and went off alone. There was an awful crowd, of course. He had just missed a lamp-post."

Mother went right over to him and gave him a little shake.

"Will you tell us what you are talking about?" she asked frantically. "Do you mean that Mr. Bradberry, who does n't know a steering-wheel from an automobile, was driving a car—this morning?"

Dawson nodded. "Fred's car," he said. "Paper hearts, white ribbon, old shoes, everything. Crowd after it like the tail of a comet!"

Mother groaned.

"But then—if he's back, with only a sprained ankle——" Dawson went on cheerfully. But our faces told him the truth. "Oh, I see," he finished awkwardly, and looked at the note in Uncle James's hand.

Well, we got Fred and Mortimer married somehow, although Uncle James had n't been rehearsed and would n't step back and nearly got married himself. Then we all went back to the house for the wedding breakfast. It one o'clock by that time, and not a word from father. We had n't dared tell Fred about the car, with her travelling trunk in it and the ivory and gold dressing-case that Anne Cartwright sent her. We knew it would be awful, with all her other clothes shipped to Palm Beach.

People came and ate the wedding breakfast and looked at the presents and sent all kinds of messages to father. That was what made it so terrible afterwards, when the papers came out with the story. They got hold of it, you know, and there was a picture of father dashing along in the automobile trimmed with paper hearts, wedding favors, and old shoes, while a dozen cupids tried to shoo him back to where Fred and Mortimer were saying, "Everybody works but father—and he rides around all day."

At two o'clock the crush was thinning out somewhat, and I was getting up courage to tell Fred about the car and her clothes, when I saw Dawson motioning to me from the door.

"Where's Bayne?" he demanded.

"Not here yet. I don't think he's coming," I answered. "He sent mother a note by special messenger saying he would have to miss the ceremony, but would be here later. Why?"

"Because I'm not going to butt in if he's around," Dawson said grimly. "If he's not—why, somebody's got to take this thing in hand. We can't let the dear old boy go careening around the country in a runaway automobile."

"I have been thinking of that," I said despairingly. "Suppose he could n't stop it, and just kept on going and going!"

"Oh, he would n't do that," Dawson reassured me. "He'd be sure to bring up against something—a post or a—barn, you know."

We stared at each other solemnly.

"I'll tell you what," Dawson said after a minute. "Let's get the detective who's watching the presents upstairs. Those chaps are pretty shrewd. Got a lock of your father's hair?"

But underneath all his levity Dawson was just as alarmed as I was. Anybody who knew father can understand the way we felt about it: he was so gentle and self-effacing, so anxious always to please mother, so—well, so utterly inadequate to be the father of extravagant wretches like Fred and myself, so hot-headed and apologetic and generally lovable. There was a story in the family that when I was a baby I called him Willie.

And all the time the music was going on, and people were eating and talking, and mother had sent upstairs for a comfortable pair of slippers, since nobody could see them anyhow. And still—no father. So Dawson and I went up and called the detective aside. He listened until we told him what we knew, which was little enough. Luckily we had the queer note he had sent to mother, and the detective read it over, aloud. Then he turned it upside down and stared at it.

"Looks like a cryptogram," he said, squinting up one eye. "'Milly loves Billy and Billy loves Kate.' May I ask—is the gentleman's name William?"

"Yes," I said shortly. It was easy to see what was in his mind. "And we don't know—anybody named Milly or Kate——" And then I stopped, for of course there was a Kate—father's second cousin, who was father's first love, and was a widow now and didn't like mother. But of course that was ridiculous.

"I think I met him on the stairs when I came in this morning," said the detective, whose appropriate name was Crooks. "Small man, short gray mustache, carried a yellow bag."

"His travelling bag!" I said feebly. "Don't dare to comfort me, Dawson. Don't I know how he has been neglected for the last two weeks? And now the noise and confusion have gone to his head, and he—he has run away like a—like a bad little boy."

"He won't be hard to trace, Miss Bradberry," the detective assured me, with something like a grin. "He's been delayed somehow, that's all. He's been well, has he? Not nervous or anxious, or anything like that, I suppose?"

"He has been worried somewhat," I quavered. "But he never did anything that was n't perfectly rational—until to-day."

Well, we got the house empty finally, and everybody gathered in father's study. Fred was still in her wedding-gown, with her veil off, and two red spots in her cheeks. She was furious.

"Did anybody ever hear of such a thing?" she snapped. "The car gone, our clothes gone—do be still, mother. I *shan't* put on anything of Tommy's. It is exactly the thing one expects from father. What sort of a honeymoon do you call this?"

Mortimer was sitting on the radiator, swinging his feet and smoking a cigarette. Uncle James and mother were fitting keys to father's desk, and Dawson stood by the window, staring out. The detective came in just as mother got the desk open.

"Good gracious!" mother said suddenly. "He has taken all the money in the house. You remember, Thomasina—the five hundred dollars you got from the bank yesterday!" She sat staring at what we called the cash-drawer.

It was really an extraordinary picture, the contrast between our wedding finery and the way we must have looked. I had had some tea sent up, for we had n't been able to eat any of the breakfast, and Collins had brought up Scotch and soda for the men.

"All the money in the house," mother repeated. "James, I wish you would fee the caterer's men. Give it all to Paul, the head waiter, and let him divide it."

Uncle James hesitated and muttered something. Then he got up and went unwillingly out. Collins was about to follow him, but Dawson turned suddenly and called him.

"I've been looking for you, Collins," he said sharply. "I want you to repeat to us what you were saying to Jenkins in the garage an hour ago."

Collins turned yellow.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he stammered. "I don't know exactly——"

"Yes, you do. Out with it," Dawson insisted, and, going over, he closed the door in the hall.

"I merely said," Collins began, with his best manner, which is very haughty indeed, "that—er—that Mr. Bradberry had been—not quite himself, sir, for—some time. The family will uphold me in that, sir." He looked around, but our faces were stony.

"That's not all," Dawson persisted. "You showed him a picture—a photograph that you had picked up somewhere in the house, and you made a few comments. The photograph, Collins."

If Collins had been yellow before, he was green now. He hesitated, put down his tray, coughed, and drew a photograph from his inner pocket. He was very solemn when he passed it over, not to Dawson, but to Mortimer. "It is a family matter, sir," he said to Mortimer in an undertone, and went out with his head up.

The picture was in the paper afterwards. I need not describe it. It showed a very good-looking young woman in a shirt waist and panama

hat and underneath was scrawled, "To my dear Mr. Bradberry." Mortimer raised his eyebrows. "Corking good-looking girl," he said. "What's this on the back? 'For Milly loves Billy and Billy loves Kate!' By Jove!"

He stuffed it in his pocket just as Uncle James came in, and then the detective got down to work. In ten minutes he had elicited the shameful fact that we knew very little about father in the daytime, except that for two or three weeks he had been away every afternoon; that the proof sheets of *The Ptolemies* were waiting untouched, to be read; that at least four times in the last week strange noises had been heard from the study, like an abortive and agonized attempt at singing; that father had not been eating at all, and had had his square beard trimmed to a point, and that he had had the cellarette moved from the billiard-room to the study, although he never drank. Lastly, he had gone away, wearing Mortimer's leather coat, in an automobile he knew nothing about, taking with him five hundred dollars in money and a travelling bag, missing his daughter's wedding and sending back by way of explanation a nonsensical verse that stuck in one's mind and kept repeating itself over and over.

"It sounds like aphasia," Dawson said. Dawson lives in a hospital and is going to be a doctor. "The verse business, and all that. Something goes wrong with the speech area, and a man calls a cobblestone a toothache."

Uncle James had come back by that time, and he insisted on opening the cellarette. None of the keys fitted, and finally they opened it with what Mr. Crooks called a jimmy. I don't know what we expected to find, but Uncle James waved us back solemnly and began to lay out the contents on the floor. When he was through, Uncle James picked up some of the articles and looked at them gingerly.

"If there was anything needed to show the true state of affairs," he said, in his vestry tone, "I think we have it here. This cellarette, locked with such scrupulous care, contains three absurdly dressed dolls, one set of chessmen lettered alphabetically, one colored Sunday supplement, with its outrageous comics, and this tin horn. Eliza, for the sake of your children you must keep up."

"Don't be silly, James," mother snapped. "There's nothing the matter with me. Let me look at those dolls."

"There was no child in whom—er—Mr. Bradberry was interested, I suppose?" asked the detective. "There are no grandchildren?"

"None," Mortimer replied gravely.

The detective was picking up the chessmen and examining them critically. They were all labelled in father's small hand, and apparently without method. There was a pawn with a capital A, and a queen had a capital A with a small a following. Altogether it was most mysterious.

Just then the detective stooped and picked up a torn bit of paper from the floor.

"Was this in the cellarette?" he demanded. Nobody knew, and he read it aloud. Only part of it was there.

"Six little tadpoles swimming in a bog
One lost his tail then a frog
hopping
Never, never stopping."

"Was Mr. Bradberry given to writing poetry?" he asked.

"That is his writing—if you call that poetry," Dawson said, examining the paper.

It was after five o'clock then, and father had been gone since early morning. Mortimer finally coaxed Fred to take off her wedding dress, and he sent around and got some of his old clothes that he had n't given his man. Fred was sunk in gloom: she had to resurrect an old gown, and she sat in the library all evening reading Gibbon's Rome. The telephone kept going all the time, and the servants were instructed to say that father was resting comfortably. Finally Mortimer gave up trying to cheer Fred, and played the pianola forlornly for two hours.

Dawson had been gone since dinner, and I missed him. He came in at nine, stopped long enough to see the mournful tableau in the library, and then came upstairs to where I sat alone in father's study.

"Where's your mother?" he asked, dropping into a chair beside me.

"Being massaged. She's frightfully nervous," I replied wearily. I had been having a bad two hours with myself, there alone in the study, with that awful stack of unpaid accounts Uncle James had resurrected on the desk. I had made up my mind, if we found father, to marry Carlton Bayne immediately, and I had even put on my engagement ring again, as a matter of conscience. Dawson saw it at once.

"I wonder if you know how transparent you are, Tommy," he asked, and, reaching over, he slid the ring off my finger and dropped it into a drawer of the desk. "Two wrongs don't make a right, and you are not going to sell yourself to pay for Fredericka's trousseau."

We both saw Collins then. He was standing majestically in the doorway, and he had Jenkins, the chauffeur, by the shoulder. Dawson got up.

"Come in, Collins," he said. "Bring in your—er—friend."

Collins dragged Jenkins forward and leaned him up against the door-post.

"He would n't come, sir," he explained. "I found him chewin' the—talkin' below-stairs, and—now, since you're so — anxious to talk!" This in an undertone to Jenkins.

Jenkins was garrulous enough when he got started. The previous day he had taken father in the new machine to the park. Here they had met and taken on Mr. Carlton Bayne, who was evidently waiting for them. The two men talked for some time, while Jenkins took the car through the park. No, he heard nothing that was said except once, but that was significant. He had slowed up to let a child get out of the way, when he heard father say ("his voice was shaky, miss,—thin and strained like"), "Bayne, it is murder, simple murder, that you propose."

I gave a little cry, and Dawson leaned over and patted my hand. "Don't be silly," he said. "Jenkins, I suppose you found a revolver or a bowie-knife in the car when you took it in?"

Jenkins put his hand to his pocket.

"No, sir," he replied. "But they dropped me in the park, Mr. Bayne driving, and were gone about an hour. Then they picked me up, and I brought the machine in. I—I found this in the tonneau."

He reached out a small tin box, rather flat, and perhaps ten inches long.

"It had been wrapped in white paper, but the paper was loose," he explained.

Dawson opened the thing curiously, while I bent forward. I had never seen anything like it before. There were crayon pencils of different kinds, two small pots of rouge, one paste and one powder; a flat jar of cold cream, and down in one end, in tissue paper, three little artificial curls, pale yellow!

"Thank you, Jenkins," Dawson said, hardly glancing at the box. "The box here belongs to Miss Bradberry. I'm afraid it won't help much. And—er—if you learn anything else, Jenkins, give us the preference over the kitchen."

"But it does n't belong to me! My hair is black!" I asserted indignantly, when the door had closed. "I never saw it before! Why, that was rouge!"

"Really!" Dawson said, calmly lifting the curls. "By Jove! there's the rest of the paper from the cellarette!"

It was. The two pieces fitted perfectly. The completed verse was idiotic enough:

Six little tadpoles swimming in a bog.
One lost his tail and then it was a frog.
All the summer day it went a hopping—hopping;
Never, never, never, never stopping.

Dawson closed the lid and put the box over with the other exhibits—the lettered chessmen, the tin horn, the three dolls, the verse, the photograph, and the Sunday comic paper. "It's a mess, is n't it!" he said, and fell to thinking, tapping the desk with his fingers.

"Bayne here at all to-day?" he asked presently. I replied in the negative.

At half past nine Mr. Crooks called up, and Mortimer got the message. He came forlornly up to the study with it.

"Car's been found," he announced. "Police found it near Grove-town, jammed into a tree beside the road. Nobody near it; bonnet crushed and lamps broken. Wind shield gone to smash. Lady's handkerchief under a seat, but Fred's trunk gone. You'll have to tell her that, Tommy; I don't dare to."

At ten Dawson got up to go. He opened the drawer again and took out the ring. "Here," he said almost roughly. "Put it on, or you'll be having more jabs of conscience. But I'll tell you this, Tommy: you are not going to marry Carlton Bayne. I'm going back to the hospital to do a dressing, and then I'm going out to find father. And when I bring him home I am going to put him in that chair there and say, 'I love Tommy, and she loves me, and she does n't mind being a poor man's wife——'"

"But I do!" I cried, getting my breath. Dawson leaned over and covered the ring with his hand. Then he stooped suddenly and kissed me.

"You don't care a rap whether I have money or not," he exulted. "You only care for *me*, Thomasina." And then he went out.

At eleven o'clock he called up and there was a note of subdued excitement in his voice.

"I know where he is, Tommy," he said. "I can't explain, but he—he was used up a little when the car struck the tree and he's—he is——"

"Oh, he's badly hurt!" I cried. "And he's at your hospital. I am coming immediately."

"You'll do nothing of the sort." He was quite stern. It is queer I did n't suspect anything from his tone. "You are going right to bed and to sleep. He'll be home to-morrow, right as a trivet."

I could hardly believe him at first, but he said father was only suffering from nervous shock, and that visitors were not allowed anyhow at the hospital after nine at night, and that father was asleep, and that if he had a good rest he could come home to-morrow and clear it all up. So at last I agreed to tell the family and get them settled and to go to bed myself. But I reckoned without mother.

Nobody ever imagined mother could take on so. She had always gone along by herself, managing everybody, and treating father either as a bad child or as an irresponsible dreamer. She always selected his clothes for him, and it was mother who insisted on the picture of Shephard's Hotel on the binding of the Ptolemies, although father said it was an anachronism.

So, when I told her what Dawson said, and that father was at

St. Luke's, nobody was prepared to have mother get up at once and insist on going to him.

"I have been a wicked and neglectful woman," she said. "Send for a carriage at once, Thomasina. Where have I put my switch?"

It was half past twelve when Mortimer helped us out of the carriage at the iron gates of St. Luke's, and rang the bell. Mother's knees would hardly hold her, and she kept repeating that she knew he was dead, and if he had only told her he was worried we would have had a smaller wedding. A night watchman in felt slippers let us in, but surprise number one came when, after looking at the books, he said there was no Mr. Bradberry in the house.

"Fiddlesticks!" mother said with something of her old spirit. "We know positively that he is here, and I am not going to move until I see him." She sat down on a bench, and the watchman looked bewildered. The place was getting on my nerves: it was full of queer smells and awful, suggestive noises. And then—somebody came out of a door nearby and stood still and stared at us in silence. It was Dawson.

Looking back, I feel sure he was unable to speak. He came forward slowly, and it was easy to see he was n't crazy about seeing us. He was dressed in a white linen hospital suit, and he smelled awfully of dog soap.

"I thought I told you not to come," he said sternly, addressing me. Mother laid her hand on his arm.

"You need not try to deceive me, Dawson. He is dying," she choked. "You can't be so cruel as to send us back! Anyhow, I shall not go."

Dawson looked bewildered.

"He's—he's perfectly well—that is—comfortable," he managed at last. "He's not dying at all. But—you can't see him, you know. He was awfully—er—upset, and, besides, it's staff orders. I'd lose my head if I'd let you in the room."

"I don't even ask that," mother said, in dumfounding humility. "If you would let me have a chair, outside the door, so I can be near if he—if he should grow worse, I would be contented. He has always had me around, and—he might ask for me."

So you can see how it happened. Dawson called Mortimer aside, and they talked for a minute. Then Dawson went flying along a corridor, and Mortimer came back.

"It's as much as Hale's life is worth," he said, "but if you will give your word not to enter the room, or even open the door, he will have chairs put in the hall outside, and you may wait there. He advises, however, that you leave early in the morning. It is a dangerous thing to break a hospital rule." Mortimer looked a little queer: I could n't

understand it, and certainly it was a grudging reception. After ten minutes we were taken upstairs and given two stiff chairs outside a closed door, while Dawson and Mortimer talked together in a sort of parlor nearby and smoked. It was dismal. Nurses came and went quietly past us, trying not to look curious, and mother took off her hat and had a pillow put back of her. She dozed now and then, after the strain of the preceding hours, and somebody far off kept up a sort of grunting groan with every breath. But in father's room it was perfectly still. Through the opaque glass of the door I could see that the light was low and the silhouette of a nurse moved around noiselessly.

Just at dawn the nurse came out and the door did not latch! Mother was asleep, and when the nurse had disappeared I gave the door a little push. It crept back inch by inch until I could see the bed. I had a lump in my throat, but I craned forward, and—it was n't father at all!

It is n't any use trying to tell how I felt. I did n't rouse mother, but I went at once to find Mortimer and Dawson, and between rage and disappointment I could hardly breathe. And the tableau that met my eyes was the second greatest shock of my life—the man who was n't father being the first. For Dawson was doing a silent but joyous clog dance on the table in the sun parlor, and Mortimer was waving a newspaper over his head and singing. When they saw me they quieted down somewhat and Dawson crawled off the table.

"It was a great lark, was n't it?" I said scathingly. "I'm going to tell mother, so she can come in and sing and dance too." But Mortimer caught me and pulled me back into the room, still doing a sort of jig step.

"Wealth!" he said. "Money to throw away! Horses, a yacht—Tommy, take off your hat. A frog he would a-wooing go: heigh-ho, says Rowley!" Then Dawson and he did a few more steps.

I was dazed. Finally Dawson took the newspaper from Mortimer and pointed to the hall. "Go out to mother," he said, "while I tell Tommy enough of the truth to ease her poor muddled little brain."

He closed the door and, coming over, proceeded to settle himself on the arm of my chair, facing me.

"It's quite a little story," he said, "and we'll take the ring off first. There—that's better. Now—what do I get if I tell you a glorious bit of news, that will make this early shaft of smoky dawn pure gold? What do I get, eh?"

"I never pay in advance," I objected, carried away in spite of myself.

"A little down, rest on delivery," Dawson insisted, and kissed me. "Well, it seems that people who write about Egypt are not all mummies. Did you ever hear the classic, 'A frog he would a-wooing go'—and

so on? Well, father—your father—decided to dramatize it. Scene of action, a pond; characters, frogs, tadpoles, goggle-eyed minnows, whirligigs——”

“Father!” I gasped. “Then—the cellarette——”

“Sure. I only learned about it last night. He figured out his situations with the chessmen. The horn, the dolls—they explain themselves. The comic supplement—greatest hit of the piece. Look what the paper says: ‘The Sunday Supplement chorus——’”

“I don’t care anything about it,” I said rudely. “I want to know where he is.”

Dawson grew suddenly serious. “We’ll get him out this morning all right,” he said, “but the fact is, Tommy, Bayne backed the show in exchange for your father’s influence with you. The dear old boy thought it a good thing for you. We traced the car to Grovetown, but that was all until Bayne walked in here late last night, with a cut in the back of his head. It seems he wanted to—er—to put into the leading push a—a young person who would have queered the play eternally. They sent for your father early yesterday, and he went—you know how—to Grovetown, where they were to open. There—he and Bayne had a disagreement and—it seems father cut him from his list of acquaintances and incidentally knocked him down.”

“Where is he?” I insisted. “You’re afraid to tell me, Dawson Hale. Why did n’t he come back for the wedding?”

“Officially,” Dawson said, “father is over there in bed in room forty-four, having been thrown from his car on his way to dress rehearsal. Actually, he is in the Grovetown lockup!”

We never told mother. I got her home early, and in the afternoon Dawson brought father home in a carriage, half smothered in newspapers that said “The Frog” was the hit of the year. While every one was making a fuss over him, and asking him how his poor head felt, and getting hot-water bottles, Dawson called me aside.

“You’re to come to the library and sign for a package, Tommy,” he said in an undertone. “I believe there was something paid down. The rest was to be on delivery.”



A QUESTION OF HONOR

By Hornor Cotes

THE president of the Gibraltar Trust Company stood up, leaning forward and resting the tips of his fingers on the edge of the long table around which his directors were assembled. Welby, whose mind is usually caught, and held, by little things, looked curiously at the president's hands, the fingers bent backward with the pressure put on them, the nails red and the skin above them whiter than natural. He lifted his eyes and noted the whiteness of the president's face and its drawn look as he spoke, nervously striving to suppress a tremor which made his voice sound a trifle husky.

"Gentlemen," the president said, trying to speak with formal precision, "now that you have all given a solemn pledge of secrecy, I want to say that—that this company will have to suspend payment in three days!" He began to say something more, then stopped abruptly and sat down, a faint tinge of color beginning to relieve the unnatural pallor of his cheeks.

For an instant there was absolute stillness in the board-room; then Vanderdecken Braithwaite, a large operator on the Exchange, sat up stiffly and a sharp explosion of abusive profanity broke harshly across the table. "Do you mean to say we're busted?" he added loudly.

The president flushed; Braithwaite was his closest business friend and the dominating member of the board. His lips quivered, but he pulled himself together.

"The company is solvent, but we have, as you know, borrowed two millions from the Consolidated, which failed day before yesterday. The receiver has called that loan, and in the present state of things I can't get the money anywhere else. We've got three days to raise it and then it's got to be paid."

At this Watson, the oldest and most conservative director of the Gibraltar, found his tongue. "Can't you get him to withdraw his call and extend the loan?"

"I've tried, and the more I urge the stiffer he gets; it only does harm. He's never been friendly to some of us here"—glancing significantly at Braithwaite.

"But two millions surely is n't so very hard to get! We've got half of it in the vaults now, besides our balances at bank."

"We *had*—this morning. We've got less than eight hundred thousand now. Some suspicion of our standing has got out on the street, there are signs of a run on us already; the withdrawals to-day were much heavier than usual, especially in the last hour. I expect it'll be worse to-morrow."

"You'll have to go to the Clearing House! You say we're solvent; they'll have to see us through," said another director querulously.

"I've been. I met the committee this morning and gave 'em a full statement. I asked for a loan of five millions and offered unquestioned collateral. They promised an answer day after to-morrow—and just before three o'clock a check for a large amount was run in, which I'm sure would n't have been presented except on a hint from Norton of the Equitable National, who's on the committee. That's the kind of fellow he is." The president stopped short with the hint of a quaver in his voice. Some wandering ray of the declining sun, finding its way through a gap in the tall buildings across the street, fell on the polished top of the table and its reflection glinted in the president's eyes, across which he put his hand with a sudden gesture. Perhaps it was the dazzle which brought moisture to them. He leaned forward with elbow on table and head in hand. The old director stared at him and looked frightened; astonishment began to give place to dismay.

"What's five millions to the Clearing House? That won't hurt 'em—they'll have to see us through," he said weakly.

"It is n't the five that's going to stop them, Mr. Watson," answered the president, looking up. "It's our seventy million deposits; if there's a serious run, they're afraid it may have to be twenty or thirty millions."

"How'd you manage to get into such a mess?" Braithwaite said explosively, staring with bulging eyes; and Welby noticed curiously that his plethoric body was pressed hard against the table edge, which cut deeply into his red-brown waistcoat.

The president's usual tone of cool, even composure came back as he looked hard at his friend. "It is our connection with some enterprises undertaken on your special recommendation, Mr. Braithwaite, which causes the street to distrust us," he said.

Braithwaite pushed back his chair roughly, got up, and started to leave the room. As if glad of an excuse to go, the rest of the board rose simultaneously.

"Wait a moment," the president said sharply. "Some of you have considerable balances," and he looked meaningly at the broker. "If any one of you draws a check, or if any check comes in which there is reason to suppose was drawn on information given by any one of you—even a hint—that check will not be paid, and the company will shut its doors then and there!"

Braithwaite, who was struggling into his overcoat, forgot himself; his face purpled furiously as he said in a quiet voice but with savage intensity, "I'll need that money!"

"I'm sorry, but you won't get it, Vanderdecken," the president replied sweetly. Welby, who had lighted a cigarette, laughed out.

"That's right, Mr. President," he said, flicking the ash into the fireplace, where several billets were smouldering on the highly polished andirons. "We're all in the same boat. I drew a hundred this morning, which will last me a day or two, I guess. After that I'll have to borrow. Will you lend me some money, Mr. Braithwaite?"

The broker snorted, but said nothing and left the room, followed by the rest of the board, most of whom went hastily, anxious to get away. The president smiled with some bitterness, wondering whether he would have a quorum at the regular meeting next day.

Carothers, junior counsel of the Gibraltar, representing his senior, who was ill, was left in the room with the president, who stood with his back to the fireplace, looking alert and almost confident. The little brush with Braithwaite had done him good. He had reasons of his own for the very unusual presence of counsel at a board meeting, and now called Carothers over to him. "I asked you here to-day," he said, "thinking some of those fellows might have something to propose and we might need legal advice, and—well, I wanted to scare them a bit, and your being here helped. Come to the meeting to-morrow; we may want you."

Carothers was silent a moment. "Mr. Mackenzie," he then said, "do you think you're going to pull through?"

"Frankly, I'm afraid not; though I've not given up hope."

"Well, last evening one of your depositors, who has been disturbed by some rumors, asked me about them. I spoke very positively and quite reassured him. He has been collecting funds to meet some notes and has arranged to make a heavy deposit to-morrow. As it is owing to my representations that he does this, I think I ought to correct those representations."

"By making use of information which you as a lawyer have received as a professional secret? You can't do that, Carothers."

The lawyer winced. "It places me in a false position, and I ought to be allowed to give a hint."

"Not a hint! If that once begins the jig is up. Our only chance is to restore confidence at once and prevent a run; if we can do that the Clearing House will make the loan and we shall be all right. I called the meeting this afternoon mainly to stop Braithwaite—he was getting nervous about the street rumors. See here, Carothers, my own sister has sold her house and deposited the money here to-day; I let her do it, because if she took it anywhere else it might make talk. It's

all she has, and if we go down I'm ruined and can't help her. I'm sorry, but I can't do anything else."

The young lawyer grew angry; he made no allowance for the pressure the president was putting on himself, and the words and tone sounded unnaturally cold-blooded to Carothers.

"Mr. Mackenzie," he broke out hotly, "it is illegal for any banking officer to receive deposits when he knows his concern is insolvent! It is a criminal offense, and I won't be a party to it!"

"Hold on, Carothers! Keep cool now!" The president spoke sharply, and the younger man instantly felt the force of his dominating personality. "Nobody's going to commit any crime, and you're not going to be a party to anything illegal. The Gibraltar is perfectly solvent to-day and will be to-morrow—that I know. Whether in the middle of this panic we shall be solvent day after to-morrow I can't foresee. I may have my fears, lots of others have them too just now, but they don't go to refusing deposits. If they did, every bank in town would break to-morrow. You may rely on this: that the moment I *know* this company is insolvent, the doors close. While they are open, deposits will be received as usual; but I know the law and am not going to break it."

Carothers was shaken. "It is perhaps rather a fine point," he said, hesitating. "You may keep within the law that way, but there seems a moral obligation—I feel it so myself."

"You are here, Mr. Carothers, as the paid counsel of this company. Your duty, and mine, is to be guided by the law. Our first duty—moral and legal—is to this corporation; and if you or I, on confidential information, injure the company that pays us, to warn a personal friend of possible danger, we are neglecting our plain duty to run after an imaginary one."

Carothers pulled himself together. "What you say, Mr. Mackenzie," he answered, "has force—I'm not denying that; but it's specious and one-sided. I have other duties than those merely professional."

"Not here!" broke in the president.

"Yes, here! Now let me match your reasoning with a plain fact. Last night my personal friend—to whom I am bound by the strongest obligations—last night he tells me he intends to withdraw his account. In ignorance of the truth I misrepresent to him the condition of the company, practically persuade him to let his money stay and to put more in to-morrow. He relies on me on account of my connection with this company, and if he loses his money he is ruined and I'm responsible for it!"

"He won't lose it. Every depositor will be paid ultimately."

"Ultimately! Yes, in a year or two; but the locking up of that money will break him now!"

The president hesitated, then the lines of his face hardened again. "Oh, well," he said with some impatience, "everybody in business has got to take risks; he's got to take this risk with the rest of us! You're arguing about something which may never happen at all! Now let me match your 'plain fact' with some more. It's a fact that he has no right to expect, nor to receive, any confidential information to the injury of this company from one of its legal advisers, as you are! It's a fact that you gave him your honest opinion! It's a fact that neither you nor any other lawyer has a right to use confidential information about the affairs of a client to his injury and for the benefit of a personal friend!"

"I'll throw up my position here and free myself! I won't be bound hand and foot in this way," said Carothers hotly.

"How is that going to help you? You're bound in any event; you're not free to make use of your client's information, given to you only because you're his lawyer, even if you do throw up his case! Now, see here, my dear boy," and the president's tone changed. "Don't worry about what's entirely in the future, if it ever does come to have any existence at all. Other people are going to make deposits to-morrow besides—well, I guess I know whom you mean. You and I have duties to all those who have money on our books. It does n't relieve us if I go to my sister and you go to your friend and tell them not to let their money stay here. We have no right to consider personal relations at all in this present business. The only thing you could *honestly* do—if you won't keep silence—I submit, is to go out on the street and warn everybody; don't let's have any favoritism about it—go to the newspapers to-night and tell them to publish a warning that any one who deposits here runs the risk of losing his money and ask them to give your name, the legal adviser of the corporation, as authority for that statement! Can you, as a lawyer, do that? If you do, you break faith with us—your clients; the company does n't open its doors to-morrow, and you have by your act tied up positively seventy millions of deposits, including what your friend already has here, and have ruined a lot of other people! And for what? To save your friend the mere risk of further loss! You can't do it. Now, see here: I've really got more hope than I told the directors just now. I pitched it pretty hot to make them stir themselves. Braithwaite's got to increase his deposit and he knows it by this time. There are other very rich men on the board; there's Watson—he's got to turn in and help. If they'll all stand by me, we'll pull through yet and your friend—and my sister—will never know they ran a moment's risk. Norton's got to make his friend put back the money he drew out to-day or I'll make it warm for the Clearing House Committee," the president said grimly. Then he sat down suddenly; a log on the andirons broke in

two with a quick spurt of flame, in the shine of which his face showed tired, worn, and old. Carothers stood irresolute on the other side of the hearth.

Presently Mr. Mackenzie said in an undertone, as if unconscious that any one else was in the room, "My God! I don't dare to think what may happen if the Gibraltar stops! I've got to save those depositors!" The room had darkened with the oncoming shades of evening; the president rose nervously and switched on the electric lamps, which flooded the room with light, glistening on the shiny mahogany furniture and the rich gilding upon the foliated cornice and ceiling of the Gibraltar's sumptuous, if over-ornate, board-room. He walked quickly up and down the room once or twice, and then sat down. He put his hand into a pocket and drew out a cigar. Clipping the end, he struck a match, leaned back, crossed one leg over the other, and looked up at the young lawyer, again the cool, alert, resolute man of business.

"I need every ounce of nerve I've got, Carothers," he said, "to meet this situation and master it. There's infinitely more at stake than the interests of your friend and mine; there are all those other depositors, whom we can't possibly pay off now and whose only protection is to go on—we can't stop! And then there are other financial institutions—if we close our doors in the midst of a panic, nobody can tell what may not happen! It would be a crime, I tell you, to lie down while there is a single chance left! And we've got a dozen chances yet if we keep our nerve. You'll ruin us if you say a word," he ended irritably.

"Well, Mr. Mackenzie," Carothers answered slowly, "I suppose I've no choice."

"You promise?"

"Oh, yes, I'll keep quiet!" The younger man could not keep irritation out of his own voice.

"Thank you, Carothers. I knew I could depend on you!"

"Don't thank me," the lawyer answered shortly. "I would n't do it if I could help myself!" He turned abruptly and left the room. The president threw his cigar into the fire and sank back huddled up in the cushions of the arm-chair. He had had a hard day.

As Carothers left the building he turned up the collar of his coat and folded the lapels across his throat with a shiver. The east wind coming from the bay was chill with the damp of declining day, but the coldness which gripped his heart was the spiritual shrinking from the cruel responsibility forced upon him. Until he had met and loved Ellen West the lawyer's dominant passion had been an exalted devotion to the highest professional ideals; and to him yet the "practice of the Law" was something infinitely greater than a means of livelihood or

of attaining distinction among men. "The Law," apart from any mere code of statutes, was greater even than a science of nature; it stood as the embodiment of Justice and Equity and of all the good that exists, the sum and substance of the principles of Truth. His friends often told him that he made a fetich of "The Law"; just now it seemed sternly to stretch out a forbidding hand. He was bound to silence; he could not say a word or give a hint to save Ellen West's father. He could not lift a finger to interfere with doom. And he felt sure in his heart that the Gibraltar would go down.

Two days later the failure of Vanderdecken Braithwaite was announced; he had been heavily involved, much more seriously than his friends had known. The inability to use the money deposited with the Trust Company, and his honest effort to uphold its tottering fortunes, had strained his credit to the breaking point; a sudden further drop in the stock market gave the finishing stroke. The same day the Gibraltar closed its doors and the next morning went into the hands of receivers.

Carothers was retained as a legal adviser of the receivers, and he knew that when the Gibraltar's affairs came before the court a liberal allowance in fees would much more than recoup any personal losses of his own. His senior was still ill, and his own connection with the affair seemed destined to make his professional reputation and to insure his business fortunes. His hand was on the wheel now and he felt strong to steer the ship skilfully through troubled legal waters. But Ellen West? The certainty of his own prosperity made even more difficult the letter which he sent to her at once to explain his course and the predicament in which he had come to be involved by no fault of his own. Foolishly, he wrote instead of going to see her at once; but he was urgently required at the bank. Perhaps more foolishly still, he tried to explain in detail and to justify himself, and that of course made the letter, written in a half-hour snatched from press of work, sound cold even to himself.

A little after three o'clock on the day the Gibraltar suspended payment some one called Carothers on the telephone. Until the name was spoken he did not recognize in the hesitating tones the voice of Ellen West's father.

"Why did n't you tell me?" and there was a break in the voice as the question was asked.

"I could not, Mr. West. It was a professional secret which I could not betray." Carothers knew he was speaking weakly, a trifle pompously. He struggled hard to put into his tones the sympathy he felt, but the very intensity of emotion stifled it.

"But you told me the Gibraltar was perfectly sound—if it had n't been for that I should have been all right now!"

"I honestly thought so when I said it. Afterwards I learned differently, but I was bound as counsel for the company not to say anything. I'm so sorry—we hoped to pull through," he concluded lamely enough.

"Oh, well, I suppose you did what you thought was right. I suppose I can't blame you."

"Is it going to seriously—to incommode you, Mr. West?"

"I'm broken, that's all. Good-by!" And the transmitter was hung up before Carothers could say another word. In the morning papers he read the announcement that the firm of West, Opdyke & Company had made an assignment for the benefit of creditors. He then went to see Ellen West, but was told she was ill and could not see him.

At breakfast a letter from her was brought to Carothers.

I have read your letter [she wrote]. I realize that your sense of professional duty bound you to do what you did. I don't understand very well, but I know how much your profession is to you and how high a sense of honor you have in everything. I don't understand, but that is because I am not a man, I suppose. Even papa says he supposes you were right, though it has ruined his life. The injustice of what has happened puzzles me, and the hardness of a man's honor frightens me. It seems to trample under foot love and loyalty, and I am afraid—afraid of you and of myself. Try to forgive me if I do not write clearly. You say you love me and yet you allowed this dreadful humiliation and distress to be brought on my dear father, when a word would have saved him. I cannot understand it, but I do not mean to reproach you. It breaks my heart.

I know now why you did not come near me for days. Do not write again and do not try to see me. It is useless.

E. W.

The writing showed the emotion under which the girl labored; letters were ill-formed and blotted, words were erased and others added. The words "it has ruined his life" burned themselves into his consciousness. She had written "*you have*" and scratched it out.

He crushed the paper in his hand. "Was I right after all," he thought, "and was it worth it?" Then he arose and went to his office.



COGITATIONS

A THRIFTY father often makes a spendthrift son.

DURING life one shakes many hands—and many persons.

IT is the pertinent question that usually is the most impertinent.

SPEAKING of gossip, even the auto runs you down behind your back.

NATURE study is ever fashionable. We are forever looking up somebody's family tree.

Walter Pulitzer

THE SHADOW OF MOLLY KINSHELA

By Josephine Van Tassel Bruorton

THE sun was low in the west when Molly Kinshela went away up to the Castle, on the other side of the little Bay of Ballybogue, with her bundle of fine laundering. The sands lay smooth there, and Molly gazed lovingly down at the dark, shapely shadow that followed her so closely, ever and always keeping her company.

Molly was vain—and why would n't she be with the hair of her as black as the sloe; the cheeks of her as red as the red, red rose; the eyes as blue as Killarney's bosom in the dawning; and the full, luscious lips of her as scarlet as the wild briar haws. And oh! the shape of her! 'T would have brought water to the mouth of Saint Anthony himself; so tall and slender and deep-bosomed was it—and as straight as a young sapling.

And it was that same ravishing shape as it was reflected in the shadow that danced along at her side, that Molly admired so much. The deep bosom, the slender neck, the sloping shoulders, the stately little head, were all there; and the short, full skirt showed a pair of the neatest feet and the trimmest ankle and a good bit of shapely leg, besides.

"Sure," she murmured admiringly, "'t is me private opinion them's the foinest pair of legs betwixt here an' Ballynasloe; an' av they were but in breechaloons—faith! 't is not Molly Kinshela wud be walkin' here by her lonesome. 'T is kaping company wid the owner of them legs I'd be—an' marryin' him too, for the matter of that."

Again she looked down at her shadow, and again she said, with a toss of her proud little head:

"Indade an' I wud, thin! If ever I saw thim legs in breechaloons, my word I'd marry thim that very minnut, in spite of Philly Doolan or me father either, even if he was the owld Divvle himself."

'T was no new thing for Molly to talk of all manner of foolishness with her shadow; and so far, as there had been no one to hear, there had been no harm done. But to-night she had gone a bit farther in her wild promising, and, a wee bit frightened at her own daring,

she started nervously and looked round sharply, even fancying for a bit that she heard a low laugh. She saw nothing, however, and turned again to go on her way. But even as she turned, a hot breath swept her cheek and a passionate voice whispered soft and low:

"Pulse of my heart, I hold you to your vow!"

Oh, but Molly was the scared girl! With a screech you could have heard a mile, she sprang away and ran like a roe-deer every step of the way to the Castle. But what with the laughing and joking with the servants there, she soon forgot it all and started back again as brisk as a bird; and never once did she think of it till she came in sight of the sands.

For a full minute Molly felt then as if she would have welcomed for company even little, bow-legged Philly Doolan, the man her father had picked out for her husband; but in a minute her courage came back, and she stepped bravely out. Then it came to her that it was All Souls' Night, and the legs of her trembled as she remembered the laugh and the hot breath on her cheek.

Then she laughed at herself for a cracked witting, and went on again; even glancing daringly down, at long last, at the sands to make sure her shadow was still there. And aw! but she was the scared girl when she could see naught of it. She stopped short and looked fearfully over her shoulder. There, just a bit behind her and as close to her as might be, was the shadow she had sought for; but not as she had been used to see it, black and flat on the sands with her short petticoat to the knee. Now it was in coat and breechaloon of cloth as red as the hot blushes on poor Molly's scared face. With a low cry of mortal terror, with an agonized prayer on her trembling lips, she ran like a scared deer.

But, run as she might, the shadow kept pace with her; and all the time she heard the passionate voice whispering, whispering, close to her ear. As yet he could not touch her, for the spirits of All Souls' Night have power over you only because of your spoken consent or your heart-willingness, and poor Molly's repentant prayers kept the clutching hands away. But the passionate voice tempted and promised, persuaded and coaxed, setting the girl a-thrill with longing. The prayer died on the scarlet lips, the rosary dropped from her limp fingers. Slower she ran and slower yet, the supple form yielding little by little to the hand that crept nearer and yet more near to the lithe waist.

Then of a sudden, when Molly's heart was at its weakest, when she could no longer resist the tempting voice because of the eager throbbing of that traitor heart, she felt herself caught close—close—in eager arms. A hot breath scorched her bosom, her cheeks; and passionate lips clung close to hers.

With a terrible scream Molly came back to her own sane, sweet self. With one frantic wrench she freed herself from the claspings arms, and, springing wide, she cried on the man who loved her more than life—the man who, in spite of the mocking and shame she had cast at him all her days, she knew now, in her hour of need, that she had trusted and loved ever and always.

“Philly! Oh, Philly! Oh, Philly Doolan!”

And then she felt herself caught again in somebody’s arms. But these arms were thin and slender and trembled about her and held her as tender and reverent as they would have held Mary Mother herself in this emergency. And a dear voice—how dear Molly had never once owned to herself before—cried on her in sore anxiety:

“Molly! Molly machree! Whatever is ailin’ ye, darlint?”

For a breath longer Molly heard the pleading, tempting whisper—felt the hot breath, the nearness of the terrible clutching arms. Then she caught up her rosary and turned her lips to Philly and kissed him, and the Thing melted away and was gone.

As Molly turned again toward home, she looked fearfully down at the sands; but only the shadows of early night, cool and dark and indistinguishable, lay there, and Molly went on with Philly, happy and unafraid, and strangely content, even though she had to stoop her foolish head a bit to lay it on his shoulder when she bade him good-night.

But spite of it all—the love, the longing, the warning—her pride put it into her silly heart to look askance at the bow legs of her Philly as he walked down the path of light that shone from the living-room of the cabin, and she muttered to herself:

“Aw! If he had but the legs of my shadow!”

Then again the hot breath scorched her, the strong arms clutched her, the passionate lips caressed her; and it was a scared Molly who pushed the rosary between her and the nameless Thing and fled into the house with the mocking laugh ringing behind her; and it was a Molly who shuddered woefully over the knowing that never again might she let her thoughts stray where they pleased as in the old innocent days.

Never again, though she walked the sands often and often on her way to the Castle, did she dare to look down where the shadow had danced beside her in the old days. And the gossips said that it was all as well she did not, for, look as sharp as they might, though the sun shone ever so bright, no one ever again saw a shadow follow Molly Kinshela.



AUNT DIANTHY

By George Allan England

"Aus der Jugendzeit, aus der Jugendzeit
Klingt ein Lied mir immerdar;
O wie liegt so weit, o wie liegt so weit
Was mir einst war! . . ."

I.

WHENEVER any broken scraps of food were left at Grandsir's table, the word was: "Give 'em to Aunt Dianthy!" Somebody was sure to say it—Grandsir himself, maybe, blind old, hook-nosed Grandsir, or sharp-faced Grammy with the square specs, or else big Uncle David. No matter who, the formula never varied: "Give 'em to Aunt Dianthy!"

When the Boy first came to visit Grandsir that summer, he thought it strange, and disgraced himself with scandalous questions.

"Aunt Dianthy, huh! She saves lots o' bother with th' leavin's, don't she?" he piped reedily. "But say, I guess th' pigs wisht there wa'n't no Aunt Dianthy, don't *you*, Gram?"

Then he wondered why Grammy's face grew so red; why Uncle David banged the table and guffawed; why Grandsir's long eyebrows (for all the world like a cat's whiskers) twitched up and down so funnily; why he, the Boy, got sent away in disgrace, his ears tingling with wise saws and modern instances about little pitchers.

After a while, though, the Boy accustomed himself to the formula and thought no more about it—came to accept it just as they all accepted everything that pertained to Aunt Dianthy, that silent old woman—"that old maid," he had heard sneered of her—who lived alone in a mean little room up the back-stairs.

In such acceptance there lay nothing very singular. Aunt Dianthy was far too unobtrusive for anything but just this one passive quality of being accepted like a gnarled, useless old apple-tree in the hill-side orchard, a broken chair in the corn-house chamber, or any other worn-out domestic thing. Her only fitness seemed in pottering round the kitchen now and then, washing dishes, mopping the floor, cleaning lamps in exchange for a few "planting" potatoes, a crust of mouldy cake, a cup of milk. "*Skim* milk will do, Sister Angie," the Boy remembered

having heard her say to Grammy. Once when they had given her a half-spoiled banana, she had cried. And yet—singular, was it not?—through it all lurked and glowed a flicker of pride, of far-off condescension on her part, as though to say:

"I have lived, too! I have lived! . . ."

The Boy did not see this, but the others saw; and who shall know what subtle vengeance for that resented flicker lurked within the words, "Give 'em to Aunt Dianthy"? They formed simply part of the interminable painting-out, the obliteration of her personality—brush-strokes on the wrinkled canvas of her life, that had dulled it to a drab background against which the little family happenings and pleasures, unshared by her, stood out with heightened color.

But of color in Aunt Dianthy's life, not one line or tint. For her no holidays, no friends, no letters, no surprises—not even the sombre recreation of the village church. Her existence lay, a stagnant marsh reflecting a November sky. Each day matched in vacuity the one before, the one to follow. And each was colorless as her own sodden face, where brownish patches hid among the lines. Upon her head not even the silver benediction of old age had fallen; her hair had the flat tints of musty straw, with faded streaks showing in the tight twist she made of it. As for her eyes, the Boy thought they might once have been blue (like his own), but now they were quite washed-out looking, with blurred pupils. What thing it is that washes light and color out of women's eyes, the Boy could not know.

He did not bother much with Aunt Dianthy, for he had other and weightier affairs—a bottle of water containing a horse-hair which shortly was to turn into a real worm; a woodchuck's burrow to supervise; a half-grown apple on a certain Red Astrakhan with his initials cut out of paper and pasted to the skin. Uncle Dave declared that some time the ripe apple would bear those initials in clear green. This was incredibly marvellous, like many other things at Grandsir's, where life was "all a wonder and a wild desire" upon which Aunt Dianthy could make no deep impress. Yet sometimes when alone at play among the great flat rocks in the pasture, or down by the brook which he had dammed with sticks and mud just above the bridge, the Boy found himself vaguely speculating about her. Not that he particularly cared in any way; she simply puzzled him with her slow, sidling limp, amused him a trifle with her bird-claw hands—"like Bud Hamlin's poll-parrot; only Aunt Dianthy don't talk half ner a quarter as much as Polly. Huh, she don't talk *none*!" he told himself.

Unconsciously he absorbed a little of the family patronage toward her, held aloof from her with something of suspicion. And more than once that summer the family slogan voiced itself through him—"Give 'em to Aunt Dianthy! . . ."

II.

ALL the morning rain had pattered on the roof, washed the fields and flicked the leaves on hedge and tree. Toward noon the clouds had rifted to let fall a sheaf of watery sunlight; but the rank grass along the brook and in the meadow still nodded heavily with water-jewels, so the fiat of indoor play had gone forth.

That meant, of course, the corn-house chamber. There was a flax-wheel in the corn-house chamber. By simply turning it the Boy could rush along miles and miles on the swiftest locomotive, whistling at stations, thundering over trestles. There was a yarn-reel that clicked enchantingly as its indicator circled the dial. There was an old candle-mould, too, made of tin tubes joined side-by-side—nothing in the world liker to a Gatling gun!—and a trunk of musty books, a box of sea-shells, a long hair-cloth sofa, a dusty model of a ship all splintered of hull and tangled of rigging, yet still a ship. The light blurred dim through the little wavy panes of the corn-house chamber window, and the cradling elm-boughs outside fingered them wistfully or whispered on the mossy shingles. So after all, though the brook and the orchard and all the other outdoor things were really more to be desired, the indoor fiat wrought no hardship.

That afternoon the Boy had played and played till he was tired of travel, of mowing down vast hordes of black-fellows in a dash up the Nile (reached by means of the dusty ship in a parlous cruise round the Cape of Good Sofa)—played till the play had all died out of him. Played till even the dim light began to wane, and just a delicate suspicion of Things silently waiting, watching from the vague corners, began to thrill him with trepidation and self-consciousness.

Then the Boy laid his playthings by and with hesitant backward glances stole very quietly down the odd, sidewise-slanting attic stairs, every board of which creaked eerily beneath his bare feet.

At the bottom a surprise waited him. Aunt Dianthy's door stood partly open.

This was very strange, for Aunt Dianthy always kept her door tight shut. Often she locked it too, as though she would bar out the world which so despitely used her.

The Boy paused, caught between instinctive dread of the unknown and a sudden gust of curiosity. With throbbing heart he hesitated, took one silent step toward the door.

Then he stopped short, almost in panic. On the sill stood Aunt Dianthy. She had appeared quite suddenly, almost without noise; and she remained there, clutching the door-jamb. Her unlovely figure loomed forbidding in the half-light.

She was smiling, a thin, anxious smile. The Boy did not comprehend the effort of that smile, yet something in it impressed him pain-

fully. It somehow reminded him of the masks in Dudley's store-window at the village; and still he could not guess what this mask might hide. It was all quite puzzling.

Aunt Dianthy and the Boy eyed each other. Which was the more afraid, who shall say? The Boy, though, was the greater coward—he turned and flitted off down the long hall; but at the stairhead Aunt Dianthy's voice arrested him. There echoed something strange in her voice, too.

"Philip," she quavered, "Philip, won't you come back—please? Here's something for you, here!"

She stretched out a bony hand.

The Boy stood hesitant. Dull wonder dragged itself across his mind. Aunt Dianthy speaking to him, actually offering him something? Could such things be? Only by an effort could he summon wits to question, "What yuh got?"

"It's—it's a penny, and I—I want you should have it."

The Boy, marvelling, wiggled his bare toes against the boards. Aunt Dianthy with a penny? But everybody said Aunt Dianthy didn't have any money! "She ain't got a copper in th' world!" he remembered Grandsir's grumbling plaint. Some deep mystery, for sure, lay coiled in this contradiction.

"Huh, where d'you get a penny?" he blurted.

"Oh, you need n't be afraid to take it," Aunt Dianthy winced. "I sold carpet-rags for it, two pounds, last spring. I presume it's mine to give if I want to? Here, Philip!"

The Boy, his doubts at rest, pattered back toward her. When the coin was in his grip, "Thanks!" he mumbled. "What's it for, anyhow? I ain't done nothin' fer you, have I?"

"Yes, yes, you have—more than anybody else for years and years! . . ."

A sudden flaw in the old woman's voice startled the Boy. He turned and fled from Aunt Dianthy, scampered along the hall, and with panic-winged feet padded down the dark, winding stairs.

III.

Thus began their friendship. Was any ever stranger—seven and seventy on common terms, May mornings side-by-side with late December afternoons?

The Boy never told anybody about the penny. He felt instinctively that it might give rise to troublesome inquiries, to possible prohibitions; but long after it was spent he cherished it in memory, for it had been the Open Sesame to Aunt Dianthy's room.

That room was a wonderful place, no denying it—a place of many stories and much play. He never quite understood why there had

been such opposition to his visiting Aunt Dianthy, such rumblings of disapproval from Grandsir, sharp innuendoes from Grammy, even jests from Uncle David. But these did not bother him greatly; for in the end his own pleadings, joined to Aunt Dianthy's timidly-voiced invitations, had prevailed, and he had been allowed to go.

"Don't handle things," Grammy cautioned, "and don't ask questions!"

"*Don't* ask questions!" Grandsir had echoed, raising his brows as though to peer with his blind eyes at the wondering Boy.

"Nope!"

"All right, then. Run along with ye, an' mind ye don't stay more 'n an hour—und'stand?"

"Yep!"

So he had been permitted.

Aunt Dianthy received him with disconcerting honors. When with tremulous yet inquisitive spirit he tapped on her door, the old woman swung it wide and ushered him in almost ceremonially.

"Sit down, Philip," she severely invited, and pointed out for him a little rocker—a child's rocker, it appeared—with a log-cabin cushion. The Boy perceived that he was making a really-truly call, and so began to feel quite grown-up and uncomfortable. He felt his ears getting red as he sat on the edge of the chair, swinging his legs and vainly trying to think of something to say.

Aunt Dianthy seemed almost as much embarrassed as the Boy. She sat down quite primly, clasped the bony fingers of one hand over her other wrist and observed her caller with fixed attention. Something in this scrutiny impressed him as strange, almost terrifying. There was something strange about her, altogether. Her sparse hair was knotted differently, and she was wearing her only bit of finery—a yellow sateen apron with a big ruffle across the bottom, all cross-stitched with purple floss.

For a long minute neither said a word. The silence, unbroken by even a clock-tick, weighed heavily in the little room lighted only by its single dormer-window. The Boy looked curiously round, observing with bright eyes Aunt Dianthy's high-posted bed covered with its print patch-work quilt, her oblong braided rug, her small sheet-iron stove behind which hung a few cooking-things. Near the window he saw a little mirror of wavy bluish glass with two tissue-paper owls atop, and beyond the mirror a shelf on which a pile of crackly china dishes crowded some old books and a shiny little brass lamp. One or two worsted mottoes and a few oval-framed family portraits—long-dead faces which Time had all but summoned back into his kind oblivion—saddened the walls.

A chill of disappointment crept over the Boy. Could this be

all, then, that Aunt Dianthy's room contained? No, there was something else in the far corner, a fat black chest with a big padlock, a most promising chest!

The Boy's eyes fixed themselves on the chest. Aunt Dianthy noted the look, with who shall say how much of gratitude for even this entering wedge of comradeship?

"There are some old things—some very old things in that chest," she ventured in her thin, cracked voice. "Things that were mine when I was a young woman, years and years ago. Things that were my father's, your great-grandfather's." Her effort at unbending, at being agreeable, was perfectly obvious even to the Boy, but he overlooked it in his relief at not being catechised about his theology and studies according to the manner of Elder Persons. He looked expectantly at Aunt Dianthy, who looked back with a strangely searching gaze, as though beyond and through him she were beholding some other face, comparing it with his own. Her observation was insistent, but the Boy did not greatly mind, for his thoughts were centred on the big chest.

"Lemme see what's in it?" he propounded bluntly.

Aunt Dianthy rose, sidled lamely to a nail driven above her bed and took down a key. The Boy slipped from his chair and lagged after as she hobbled to the chest. He stood beside her, watched her bend and open it. The lock did not squeak, nor did the hinges, for no day passed when Aunt Dianthy failed to open the chest. But of this the Boy knew nothing.

"Gee! It smells funny, don't it?" he commented, as the mingled scent of camphor and cedar-twigs rose about him. "Only old clo'es in there?" he added with disappointment. He had expected at the very least Revolutionary uniforms all gold-lace and brass-buttons, a sword and pistol, maybe even some kind of treasure, such as the books always said was hidden in just such chests. But no—Aunt Dianthy's chest seemed utterly commonplace. Not even the old woman's painstaking description of each heirloom could render it otherwise. Alpaca shawls, beaded "fascinators," lisle-thread mitts and cylindrical beaver hats with narrow brims, faded blue coats with collars and long tails, even poke-bonnets of frilly green silk, have no great charms for boys. Neither have curious black locket, all knobby and warty-looking, with coils of hair inside, even though one's Aunt Dianthy compares one's own hair with the coils, and falls a-musing with the *mournfullest* expression. So the Boy found himself bored, and fidgeted uneasily.

"That all?" he demanded.

"No, Philip, not quite all," the old woman answered gently. She bent, and with an effort lifted out a green pasteboard box all printed over with funny pictures of horses pulling little cars on very big

wheels along narrow tracks. The box was tied with yarn in careful, homely fashion. The Boy's interest revived.

Aunt Dianthy patiently undid the knots, took off the cover.

"Oh, Aunt, can I play with those?" exclaimed the Boy. Inside the box lay some really promising things—a humming-top, all dented and worn, two or three calico bean-bags, an old rubber ball, and many other boy-treasures. Best of all was a marble-game—a smooth round board with shallow grooves in which the marbles rolled fascinatingly. With these things all spread out on the floor around him, the Boy forgot his greater expectations in the lesser actualities, forgot Aunt Dianthy, forgot even the passage of time itself.

Aunt Dianthy did not forget the Boy. From her prim chair she watched his every move. The lines in her face grew hard; she gripped her wizened hands together very tightly.

Thus the first visit passed.

"It's time for you to go, Philip," said Aunt Dianthy at length.

"Aw, can't I stay a little bit longer—just a little teeny bit?" the Boy pleaded, but Aunt Dianthy was as steel.

"No, Philip, not this time," she vetoed him. "You've been here long enough, now. But perhaps next time you can stay longer. Let's put the things all back, and close the chest."

So the Boy had reluctantly to take his leave.

"Who'd those things b'long to, anyhow?" he queried, at the door. "Your father, like the coats an' hats?"

"No, not my father."

"Well, who?"

"Another little boy like you—dear—a long, long time ago."

"What was *his* name?" the Boy persisted; but Aunt Dianthy, as with a sudden bold determination, bent and kissed him on the forehead, then gently put him outside and closed the door.

The Boy, wondering in the vacant hall, rubbed the kiss off with his little grimy paw.

IV.

CLEAR golden weather ushered in the autumn; and now drew near the time when the Boy must say farewell to Grandsir's with all that made it dear, and journey sorrowfully back to town, to school, to all that other life which seemed so dull by contrast. Not even the thought of seeing Mother again could quite make up for losing Grandsir's.

There was so much to stay for! The horse-hair in the bottle still refused to metamorphose itself. The Boy felt that if he could only stay just a week longer, just three days, why, perhaps, perhaps—who could tell *what* might n't happen? And his initials on the apple were not quite ready yet, nor was his dam at all satisfactory. No matter

how high he plastered it up by nightfall, there always would be a thin trickle over it, next morning. The Boy wanted so much a little more time, just a little more! . . .

Then, too, he hated to think of foregoing his visits to Aunt Dianthy. There had been many of these, and each had seemed better than the one before. There had been such good playings, such stories of the early days! True, Aunt Dianthy lacked imagination—but she was so delightfully circumstantial! The Boy felt almost as if he, too, had lived in pioneer times, along with Great-uncle Aquilla and the Red Injun by the astonishing name of Sockabason Bean, who together had run Pontook Falls in a bateau, the year of the great freshet—felt almost that he too, like Grandfather Newell, had been chased twelve miles down Black River by a “lucivee.” It was all very shuddery and horrible and fascinating, especially when the lucivee screamed right in the tamarack-branches over Grandfather’s head, at dusk. The Boy came to think no place in the world was quite like Aunt Dianthy’s room, with its chest and its green pasteboard box of toys and its interminable stories. He would sit for an hour wide-eyed on a little tomato-like hassock in front of Aunt Dianthy, listening to the same tales over and over again: “Well, when Grandfather heard the lucivee scream, he dropped his axe and *run*, and the lucivee run after him like chain-lightning! . . .”

The Boy’s departure had been set for Wednesday. On Tuesday afternoon he paid Aunt Dianthy his last visit.

“I presume you will forget me, Philip, very soon after you arrive back home,” the old woman said precisely, when the story-telling was finished for the last time and all the time-battered playthings had been put back for their long rest in the green pasteboard box. “You will forget me just the same as—as some other folks have done.”

“No, no, I won’t, Aunt! I won’t *never*—lay-me-down-an’-cut-me-in-two-ly, I won’t!”

But Aunt Dianthy only smiled oddly and shook her head.

“Well, well,” she sighed, “maybe you won’t, but I’m a foolish, weak old woman to hope it. I do wish it might be so! Perhaps then there might be *somebody* in the family, some time, that would understand! . . . Oh if you only *could* remember and understand, it seems to me perhaps the earth would n’t lie quite so heavy.”

And while the Boy looked, wondered, Aunt Dianthy limped over to her little book-shelf and brought back a couple of daguerreotypes. She sat down with the worn, stained little boxes in her hand, undid the hasp of one, and opened it.

“Philip, do you know who *that* is?” she asked suddenly in a strange, proud voice, holding the picture out to him.

He saw a dim face gazing out at him from behind the blurs and crackles of the ancient film—a woman's face, young and round and pretty, with parted hair drawn in smooth plats to either side. On the cheeks still lingered a tinge of the pink which some long-dead artist had delicately brushed across them.

"There, that's your Great-aunt Dianthia when she still had somebody to love her!" she exclaimed almost fiercely, not waiting for his question. "And this picture—look at this!"

The other was a boy, full figure, absurdly dressed in checkered clothes and standing beside a high-backed chair with tassels round the edge. The boy wore curls and a funny short jacket, and his trousers fell almost to the tops of his clumsy boots. Altogether a most curious-looking boy—and yet Philip thought he looked a little bit familiar. The picture puzzled him immensely.

"Why—why, Aunt Dianthy—he's a teeny little mite like *me*, ain't he?"

The old woman slid her arm about him with a sudden gesture that somehow reminded him of his own mother. She drew him close and kissed him. The Boy thought he felt her tremble, and he grew afraid.

"Philip—that was my boy, *my* boy—understand?" she broke forth. "All my own—the only thing I ever had!"

"Your little boy? . . ."

"Mine, Philip—and like you in a dozen ways—even the way he used to play with those same things—and that was more than forty years ago. When I saw *you* playing with them——"

The Boy thought Aunt Dianthy must be choking; he squirmed uneasily with sudden dread. He tried to think of something to say, for he felt he must say something or there might take place that most horrible thing—a grown-up's weeping—but Aunt Dianthy went on:

"He—he did n't grow up. I suppose I had n't any right to him. Everybody flung that at me; everybody thought so. Perhaps God thought so, too. So he was taken away. But it seemed to *me* I had a right to him, after I'd bought him, paid for him!"

"Oh, Aunt Dianthy! *Bought* him?"

"Yes, and paid for him with my whole life, all that I had—everything. I've been paying for years and years! I paid when the family drove me out, and I paid more when they let me crawl back. I've paid with being their slave, with living all alone like the lepers it tells about in the Book—me, my own self, I tell you, buried alive by *them*! I've paid by eating their refuse! 'Give 'em to Aunt Dianthy!'—that's been part of the price! Even my own sister, your grandmother—she's made me pay and pay and pay to the last drop of blood! Oh, I know the price of a child! I know, I know!"

"Ow, don't! You're hurtin' me!" winced the Boy, not under-

standing at all, but just terribly afraid of Aunt Dianthy's voice and the grip on his arm.

The old woman's fingers relaxed; she seemed in one moment to become weak again, broken and senile. Her head drooped and the fire in her blurred eyes drenched itself in scanty tears. One lone drop ran slowly down along her nose, trickled to her tremulous chin.

The Boy, all confusion, hung his head too. He found no thing to do or say. For an instant the idea flashed to him that he ought to kiss Aunt Dianthy and try to comfort her; but as he stole a shame-faced little glance, the impish desire to laugh beleaguered him. His half-formulated sympathy faded into a lively discomfort, a quick desire to escape.

He edged away from her, all trepidation.

"G-g-good-by, Aunt Dianthy," he stammered.

Uncertainly he stretched forth his hand, but Aunt Dianthy did not see it. She was crying feebly with the unlovely grief of old age, over the daguerreotype which she gripped tightly in her twisted, knuckly fingers.

The Boy stole from the room and shut the door quite gently after him. Aunt Dianthy did not raise her head.

V.

HE had meant to see her again, to say good-by really and truly before going away; but somehow in the excitement and hubbub of that early morning start, with the stage-coach waiting and all the bundles and instructions to be thought of, Aunt Dianthy quite slipped his mind.

Grandsir blunderingly shook hands with him; Uncle Dave patted him on the shoulder and promised to look out for the bottled horse-hair; Grammy stuffed his pockets with caraway-cookies and kissed him resoundingly. There was a great to-do as the stage got under way again, with him perched up on the front seat beside Eli Perkins, the old driver. The Boy felt very important and very happy, even in spite of being schoolward bound.

Just for a moment as the stage dipped into the leafy hollow beyond the orchard and rumbled toward the bridge, he snatched one last glimpse of the old house, of its high chimney-stacks and its sun-smitten dormers.

At one of these he seemed to note somebody peering forth—a small, dim figure. Then the coach boomed out onto the bridge-planking, the Boy craned to see the overflowing dam which he had built; and thus, quite suddenly, he passed beyond the boundaries of Grandsir's.

Aunt Dianthy, already half-forgotten, had faded forever from his life.

THOSE NERVES

By George Lincoln Walton, M.D.

CHARACTER-LEAKAGE

THE LAST OF THREE IMPORTANT PAPERS—A POPULAR DISCUSSION OF NERVOUS DISORDERS, REAL OR IMAGINARY, BY THE AUTHOR OF THAT HELPFUL LITTLE BOOK, "WHY WORRY?"

No one is free who commands not himself.

—EPICTETUS.

THE first step I have to suggest for training in self-control may, to the ambitious, seem trivial, but I have found it extremely practical.

The game of self-control is like that of golf—it takes many years of training and practice to accomplish even fair results. Only the genius becomes adept. But in any event, the aspirant for the long drive must first learn *to hold the club*.

I have become convinced that no one can achieve mental tranquillity who cannot learn to keep his *body* still,—to refrain from the habit movements called by Professor Wenley of Michigan University signs of "character-leakage." Among these movements the most familiar are drumming and tapping with the fingers and toes, clearing the throat, and walking restlessly about. This is the sort of thing our mother taught us to avoid in childhood, but it did not make the impression it ought because we thought she was only trying her voice. If one can refrain from a single movement of this kind on the first day, he has begun to learn to "hold the club." The hand may be easily arrested, for example, on its way to massaging the countenance by having in readiness this reminder: "Push not thy face!"

Elbert Hubbard says of a successful trainer, formerly of athletes, now of nervous invalids: "When he sits he does not cross his legs, play the devil's tattoo with his hands, twist his mustache, stroke his hair, scratch his nose, adjust his necktie, nor examine his finger-nails. He completes his toilet in his room."

Some time when impatiently waiting for your train cease that restless pacing up and down, and try the following experiment: Stand

at attention with your back against the wall, and say to yourself, "I will see how long I can stand in this position without moving hand or foot." Do not be afraid of attracting notice—no one will cast a glance in your direction; all are too preoccupied to note surroundings. If you succeed in becoming interested, you will find yourself rather disappointed than otherwise to have the experiment interrupted by the arrival of your train.

"What's the reason," one of these angry trampers paused to exclaim, "I always see so many more cars going the other way than I do going my way?"

"I suppose," answered his easy-going friend, "it's because you take the first one that comes along going your way."

It may, perhaps, be claimed that when a supreme effort is to be made, continuous movements keep the muscles in readiness. It is possible that the ball-player is more ready to catch the ball if he keeps his hands in motion beforehand, but I strongly suspect that if he could learn to stand at ease, he would be quite as ready for the emergency. In any event, it seems hardly probable that there is enough temporary advantage to offset the tiring effect of indefinitely continuing these movements. Suppose, again, that we are preparing for an *intellectual* effort, how can twiddling the watch-chain, consulting the time-piece at frequent intervals, adjusting the eyeglasses, and snapping the fingers stimulate the *brain* to more effective work?

It is doubtless true that when one has formed the lifelong habit of accompanying every undertaking by such movements, their prevention throws him into confusion. Amusing instances are cited of public speeches spoilt by withdrawal of the customary stimulus. But the fact that we rely upon a habit does not argue its necessity or even its usefulness. It shows weakness rather than strength that one person relies upon alcohol, another upon a cigar, and still another upon a cup of strong tea, and it is safe to assert that if the individual thus handicapped had learned to forego these stimulants he could perform work, whether physical or intellectual, with equal effectiveness and less exhaustion. Nor is it ever too late to undertake one's reëducation. There is no question in my mind of the justness of Crane's observation: "Persistent, faithful, determined effort will overcome the most dominant habit that ever fastened itself on a human being."

It is when we are placed, by accident or illness, in a position of prolonged recumbency that we reap the reward of the practice suggested in this chapter. This is particularly true if the injury, say a broken leg, is unaccompanied by general bodily illness. Once placed in this position, it is too late to acquire the ability to retain indefinitely, and without special discomfort, the posture necessary for the healing of the fracture, and we may be thankful if we have already gained some self-

control. It seems much to ask of the busy man that instead of fretting his way through the idleness enforced by a fractured thigh-bone, he view the experience as a needed vacation, and take the occasion to recuperate his jangled nerves, instead of adding to their wear and tear, but really there is no one who cannot lessen somewhat the discomfort of this situation by the cultivation of mental and physical calm.

"But I never was sick in my life, and I never took a vacation, and I can't stand it," fumes the patient.

"Much to be thankful for, and much lost time to be made up," might the medical adviser answer, if the direct appeal were ever effective.

Before commencing the training against "leakage" movements, it is essential that they be recognized. We are well aware that our neighbor clears his throat and smacks his lips at regular intervals, but when we first learn that we do these things we are taken quite aback. These customary acts produce no more sensation than the pressure of the ring upon our finger. We must begin our training, then, by realizing the leakage. We must have the check-impulse ready, just as when one throws his line for the nimble brook-trout he must be ready for the reverse movement, or the fish is off and the bait as well.

The question may be asked whether this self-observation does not savor of the morbid introspection we are counselled to avoid? I think not. Morbid introspection has to do with our feelings rather than with our acts. Even if self-observation be introspective, it is no more morbid to cultivate repose of body and mind than to practise using the hair-brush and the fork instead of the fingers. If we should overlook ourselves entirely we might become obnoxious to our neighbors.

LOVE NEVER IS TOO LATE

BY FLORENCE EARLE COATES

LOVE never is too late: It seems,
Within itself, all that is lasting gain;
And, or at morn or midnight, comes
With blessings in its train.

We tarry, slow to give, alas!

But, though delayed, love never is too late—
Love, that has power beyond the grave to pass,
And enter Heaven's gate!

BETWEEN TRAINS

By Thomas L. Masson

Author of "The Von Blumers," "A Bachelor's Baby," etc.

ONLY one man got off the train at Meadowlands. He was the man from Pinkerton's.

There was another man there to meet him. He was a short, stocky man, with a slouch hat and an overcoat much frayed at the edges. He also had on top-boots, much wrinkled and gray on the curves from exposure.

The two men nodded to each other. The man from Pinkerton's led the way to a corner of the tumble-down station, where they could n't be overheard by the lonesome hack-driver.

"You've got him?"

"I know where he is."

"Anybody watching the house?"

"One of my deputies."

"Where is it located?"

"About a mile and a half down the road, off the main street."

"Farm-house?"

"Yes."

"Your rig here?"

"Yes. 'Round on the other side."

The man from Pinkerton's pulled forth from his pocket two long, black stogies. He handed one to the sheriff, and, putting the other securely between his teeth, proceeded to strike a match and light it. The sheriff followed his example.

"Well, we'll run along."

The sheriff unhitched his horse, and, following the man from Pinkerton's, got into the rig. He chirked up the mare, and they drove off slowly down the road.

"He's the slickest pad in the country," volunteered the man from Pinkerton's, between puffs. "He'll show fight."

The sheriff did not appear to be disconcerted by this statement. No man from Pinkerton's or from any other place on the face of the earth could patronize him or betray him into any admission of inferiority.

"He'll get all that's coming to him," he said shortly.

"You're sure he don't know we're coming?"

"Sure. My man is out behind the wood-pile."

"Well, we'll see. He's slick all right."

Having delivered himself of this observation, the man from Pinkerton's remained in deep thought while the rig rolled along the country road. As for the sheriff, his not to volunteer any unnecessary information; his but to do and die, rather than to ask questions.

Ten minutes passed. The man from Pinkerton's looked ahead.

"That the house?"

A neat little farm-house, with a red barn in the rear and a stretch of meadow beyond, loomed in the near distance on the right.

"Yep."

"Who lives in it?"

"Widow Brooks and her daughter. They take boarders."

The sheriff checked himself involuntarily. He had made an admission not called for. He must be careful to confine himself to direct questions, without wandering afield.

"Know your rig?"

"Yep. Widow does."

The man from Pinkerton's looked back. The hack was coming right behind them.

"Hold up."

The sheriff checked the horse.

"I'll get out, get into the hack, and drive up. You ride on a bit, and then come back and enter the house through the kitchen. I'll inquire for board, go in and cover him. Do you stand ready to come in through the kitchen."

The sheriff smiled grimly.

"Thought it was kind o' foolish for you to drive along with me," he vouchsafed, "but I guess you know your business best."

The exchange was made. The decrepit hack, with its new occupant, drove slowly up to the door of the farm-house.

The man from Pinkerton's knocked at the door. A woman came out. She bowed and smiled.

"Mrs. Brooks?"

"Yes, sir. Won't you come in?"

The manner of the man from Pinkerton's changed. He was the incarnation of affability.

"Thank you. I am staying in the village for a few days, and have been recommended to your house. Could you accommodate me?"

"Yes, sir. You have business in the village?"

"I will explain all that to your satisfaction presently. I am a friend of the president of the bank, Mr. Pratt. Shall I walk in and look around?"

"Come right in."

She led the way into the long living-room on the right. There was the sound of voices in the rear of the room. In the dim light two figures rose.

"My daughter, Mr.——"

"Jackson."

"Mr. Jackson; and this is Mr. Allen."

The man from Pinkerton's walked up to Mr. Allen as if to shake hands with him. That young man, obeying an almost mechanical instinct, put his hand down to his side. But the man from Pinkerton's was too quick. In a twinkling he had whipped a revolver out of his coat pocket.

"None of that. You're all in."

He covered Mr. Allen.

The two women stood as if paralyzed. From the rear door, entering the kitchen, appeared the form of the sheriff.

"Pin him."

The sheriff obeyed. He reached down into Mr. Allen's pocket—in the rear—and drew forth a gun. The man from Pinkerton's stepped forward and clapped a pair of handcuffs on his quarry. It was all over in a moment.

Allen was the first one to smile.

"You got me dead to rights," he said. "I was off guard—for once in my life."

He nodded toward the girl, and looked apologetically at the man from Pinkerton's, as if to say, "Any man would be likely to be caught in a trap like this."

The man from Pinkerton's could afford to be pleasant over it. Everything had passed off so smoothly that he was naturally in the best humor in the world.

"No blame to you, old man," he said.

He looked admiringly at the girl, whose pale face stared up blankly at him from the chair, where she had almost fallen, supported in her mother's arms.

"I would n't blame myself for anything under the circumstances," he continued. "But, my boy, if you've been monkeying with the girl—well, I'll make it as hard as I can for you. What time is the up train?" he continued, speaking directly to the sheriff.

The sheriff looked at his watch.

"Four o'clock—an hour from now."

"All right. You hold him, will you? Call in your man to help. I want to have a few words with this lady."

He turned to Mrs. Brooks.

"Madam, I——"

"I cannot leave her, sir."

"That's all right. Sheriff, you take him out and leave us to ourselves. It won't take me more than ten minutes."

The sheriff started out with Mr. Allen.

The girl sprang forward and threw her arms around the neck of the prisoner.

"You shall not take him!" she cried. "There is something wrong. Why did you let them take you?"

"They got me off my guard, dear. I've got to go with them."

"He's done time before," said the man from Pinkerton's significantly, to Mrs. Brooks. "He knows he's all in. Ain't that right, Peachie?"

Mr. Allen nodded. He turned to the girl who clung to him, forcing her gently away.

"It's no use," he said. "Brace up. I can't help myself now. You must get back your nerve. Come, now."

She loosened her grip. He kissed her, and, taking the sheriff's arm, disappeared.

The man from Pinkerton's turned to Mrs. Brooks.

"I'd like to say this to you alone, ma'am," he said with a note of respect in his voice hitherto foreign to it. "You see, I've been up against this sort of thing before. But never mind. I guess it won't hurt her much now. It's only the truth."

The two women were huddled together—a mass of gray grief.

"You see," said the man from Pinkerton's, "you must n't blame yourself too much. It's natural, when you come to think it over. Here's a young, pretty girl living in a country town, with only a lot of hayseeds to keep her company. She knows 'em all so well that she's too used to 'em. She can't pick out their good qualities. There ain't no romance about your next-door neighbor. Well, here comes along a young and handsome chap from town. He's quick on his feet, he's well educated—none better, and I know most of 'em—and he's a smooth talker. He's been out into the world, and been up against it, and he knows things. Then, ma'am, there's a something else. These 'ere criminals they possess a fascination for a young girl—well, you can't just account for it, but it's all there. It's kind of instinctive. Oh, I've seen it all over. It's funny the way it works. The better the girl, the quicker she feels it. Yes, that's right. I——"

The girl sprang up.

"Don't you say any more!" she cried. "He's my husband. I married him yesterday. If you had n't come, we would have been—so happy. I could kill you!"

The man from Pinkerton's face grew softer. He whistled dubiously.

"Is that true, ma'am?" he asked.

Mrs. Brooks nodded through her tears.

"Yes, sir. He came here nearly four weeks ago. He had letters. He said he was an artist——"

"He is, in his line."

"And we thought him a perfect gentleman. I warned Helen not to see too much of him. I saw that she was falling in love with him. Three days ago I told him he must leave. He promised me that he would. Yesterday they both disappeared in the morning, and when they returned they said they had been married."

The man from Pinkerton's got up. He shook his head, half to himself.

"Well, ma'am, I'm sorry," he said. "I got here a day too late. But it ain't my fault. I did the best I could. We must be going. You can come and see him if you want to. The papers will tell you all about it. Good-day."

When he had gone, the mother turned to the girl.

"Helen," she whispered, "how could you? I felt that I was right about it. That is why I warned you, that is why I told him to go away. Why did you do this? Oh, Helen dear, if you had only known—beforehand!"

And the girl by her side looked up quietly and said:

"I did know, mother. I made him tell me just what he was, before I married him."



HERE

BY JOHN KENDRICK BANGS

THE North wind blows from the land of snows,
The South from the home of the budding rose;
The West wind blows from the day that's done,
The East from the land of the rising sun.

Here is the spot where the rose's sigh
And the cooling breath of the Arctic sky
Together meet in a gladsome way
To join to-morrow with yesterday.

And here is Heaven, and woe's surcease,
And here is joy, and a perfect peace—
The future's fair, and the past is sweet,
In the land where the joyous four winds meet.

THE DEATH SENTENCE

By Caroline Ticknor

THE stillness in the doctor's office was ominously oppressive to the tense, motionless figure in the stiff arm-chair. The little clock upon the mantel ticked with obtrusive regularity, while the bronze dragon candlesticks, on either side, stood like two frowning sentinels.

The patient lifted his dark, expressive eyes and let them rest furtively on the averted profile of the professional man, who was intent upon adjusting certain papers on his desk, and seemed in no haste to respond to the unuttered question which trembled on the other's lips.

He was in no haste to respond. Indeed, never in all his life had this practitioner desired so heartily to shirk a painful duty. It was, moreover, a duty that did not strictly belong to him. Yes, it was truly a cruel freak of fate which had summoned away his elder colleague that afternoon and had imposed upon John Elwell the painful duty of pronouncing sentence upon his friend and classmate, Wallace Chase.

"Well, doctor?"

The young practitioner raised his own piercing eyes, and the two took each other's measure for a moment. The patient's voice was steady, but the accompanying smile he strove to summon proved but a woeful failure. Then he compressed his lips and turned his head sharply away. He was suddenly possessed by an intense desire to postpone the reply he would have hastened a moment since.

The doctor pulled himself together and prepared to speak. What right had he to shirk? Burton had said, "Chase has a right to know the truth, and he has asked for it;" and why had Burton been hurriedly called off just at the crucial moment!

The telephone rang sharply, and the brief respite it brought was welcomed by both men.

Chase rose and strolled to the window, while the eyes of the doctor followed him intently as he held the receiver to his ear.

A querulous old gentleman was anxious to describe his symptoms, and the young doctor alternately listened and gave certain injunctions, but all the while he was mentally reviewing his recent conversation with Burton.

"Chase will be here at five o'clock," Burton had said. "He has insisted upon my exact verdict. Of course you know he's doomed, poor chap. Not the ghost of a chance for him. He cannot live six months. I've packed him off to Southern Italy to join his relatives. His man Ford is a trained attendant, and will look out for him; they sail on Saturday. He has asked for the truth, and no one has a right to keep it from him." And now it was Elwell's portion to transmit the truth.

"Good-by." The querulous old gentleman had finished the recital of his symptoms. Elwell clicked the receiver sharply into place.

He rose impulsively as Chase turned from the window.

"Wallace," he cried, "cheer up, old man! You're coming out all right! Burton was called away and left me to fix you up to start on Saturday. I tell you, the voyage and the stay in Italy will make a new man of you."

The color slowly mounted to Chase's temples, then receded, leaving him ghastly white; he steadied himself against the table. "Are you sure there's no mistake? Mind you, I want to know the truth. I'm not a baby. Burton gave me to understand my case was serious, perhaps hopeless." A far-away expression crept into the speaker's face, as if he had already experienced the bitterness of the word.

"Serious, yes; but not hopeless. I tell you, man, just stop worrying about yourself! Make up your mind to let Ford see to the petty details. Have all the fun you can, provided you don't overdo. Now sit down and we'll see about the string of remedies that Burton put up for you to take away with you."

A half-hour only had elapsed, yet what a different world it was that Chase looked out upon as he waved Elwell a joyous good-by and drove off briskly in his high trap.

The other watched him go, with a mist gathering in his eyes. "Poor chap, he's doomed, as Burton says, but who am I that I should take away his hope. I'm glad Burton was called away, for he would not have lied to him. The truth—bah! It has killed many poor devils long before their time."

As Chase turned into a long, shady lane, he spied a slender feminine figure ahead of him. A moment more and he had reined up and was calling out gaily:

"I've caught you and you can't escape." And after a few bantering words he drove off with his fair prize at his side.

"Eleanor, I was on my way to see you."

"It is a long time since you've been there."

"I've been in the depths, dear, and not fit company for any one."

She eyed him searchingly. "I think you're looking better than when I saw you last."

"I am better, for in the last half-hour I've got my hope back. The doctor's sending me abroad, but only for a few months, and then I'm coming back to you, Eleanor, well and strong, and ready to do a man's work in the world."

Her eyes were full of tears.

He shifted his whip into his left hand with the reins, and with his right hand clasped the one that rested close beside him.

"Now that I've got my hope back, I'm going to say things to you. You have known them all along, but I could not have said them unless I could have hoped to get my health. I went up there this afternoon to hear my doom. I was sure of it. I had planned to sneak away when it came. I could not face you with my trouble. I was going to slip away to die somewhere in Italy—the family are over there now, you know."

"Cruel! You could not have gone off like that, knowing I cared!" Eleanor's tears were falling.

"Dear, I had thought it over a thousand times; it would have been the kindest thing for both of us. How could I be sure how much you cared, and how could I ask you to tell me under such conditions? You might have been just sorry, and not known the difference. But now let us forget what might have happened. I love you, dear—you've known that always, but now I dare to say it; for years it was not time to tell you, and then my health broke down, but now I'm going to get well. Ford goes along to take care of me. I'll come back for you in a few months, or—Eleanor, would you, could you, go with me now? Marry me before Saturday? I must sail Saturday!"

He drew rein in the shady lane and kissed her. And she sobbed on his shoulder.

"I will go with you Saturday. Do you think I will let you go without me, now that I know you want me? Do you think I will lose those long beautiful months with you, out of my life?"

John Elwell, M.D., stood on the steamship dock awaiting the arrival of the great ocean liner which was now slowly steaming up the bay. His ordinarily smooth brow was deeply furrowed, and he looked worn and anxious. He meditated grimly that the dock where he stood seemed to his mental vision more like a criminal dock than one belonging to the steamship company. Unconscious of the chattering groups about him, he seemed to gaze judicially at his own figure arraigned before the bar of his accusing conscience.

He reviewed rapidly each circumstance connected with Wallace Chase, and asked himself, as he had done repeatedly during the past ten days, if he could ever justify himself for fostering false hopes in Chase during that crucial interview. He had lied to the other for

what had seemed his good, and on such grounds the lie was justifiable, but then, all unexpectedly, the situation had changed: it now included Eleanor, with whose life's happiness he had tampered unwittingly. He knew that on the strength of his assurance the hasty marriage had been consummated. He had lied to a man who had hung upon his verdict in order to be guided by it in mapping out his future conduct. This he had done to make the sick man's last days happier, and he had all unconsciously wrecked the happiness of one of the loveliest women in the world.

Now Chase was gone, and the incoming ship was bringing Eleanor, a broken-hearted widow. Because of him—Elwell—she had endured the bitterest agony that is the portion of any mortal. It was because of him, for Chase had told him in a farewell note that he had planned, if there was really no hope for him, to slip away alone. He never would have married her if he had known the truth, which Elwell had withheld from him, and she—well, she would have grieved bitterly, but it would have been different from this.

Yes, the incoming steamer was bringing Eleanor in widow's weeds. She was a victim to a lie that he had told, well-meaning but unpardonable. He owed her all possible reparation, yet he was powerless to render any. He could only sue for her pardon and do all in his power to help her, if help she craved.

Burton had been the first to see the small note in the paper a fortnight since, and had handed the sheet to Elwell, remarking: "He's gone, poor chap. I never thought that he could live ten months. I'm sorry for the girl, but 't was a crazy thing to marry a man doomed as he was. Well, he was warned; you told him what the chances were."

There had been a humming in Elwell's ears as he picked up the sheet. "Poor chap," he murmured. "Poor Eleanor;" and then his conscience had begun that siege of torment which had gone on up to the present moment.

The ship was almost at the dock, and Elwell felt his eyes grow misty, the sunlight blur before his vision; he took his glasses off and wiped them savagely. He had caught a glimpse of a slight figure in black leaning upon the rail; he looked again and knew that it was Eleanor; then his eyes blurred a second time, but, strange to say, with that brief glimpse of her there came upon him a sudden strange revulsion of feeling; a sense of peace and exaltation swept over him, replacing in an instant his previous sense of deep contrition for the part that he had played. All in an instant he knew that by those words he had been bitterly repenting he had given Eleanor the very best that life had stored up for her. Whatever she had suffered in losing what had been her own for a few months, was as nothing in

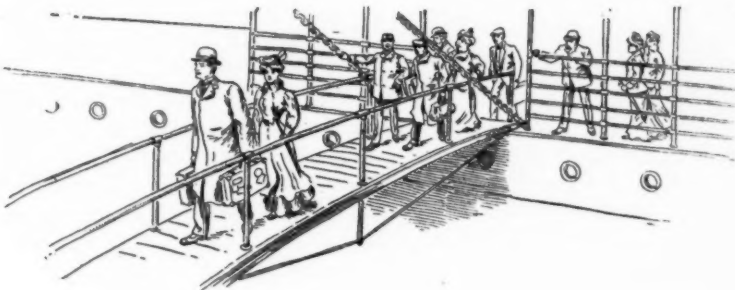
comparison with that empty and cruel desolation which would have been her portion had the man whom she loved left her without a word. He knew now, without a shadow of doubt, that if he told her of that false, impulsive verdict which had so changed her life, she would thank him upon her bended knees for that hope which had bestowed upon her months of dear companionship and given her now the right to mourn.

The incoming liner was close beside the dock; Elwell made his way towards the gangplank.

In the intensity of his conflicting feelings, he had focussed his whole attention upon one figure—Eleanor. Now his gaze rested on the group in which she stood; by his side he saw an older woman shrouded in heavy crape, upon whom Eleanor was bestowing anxious attention. Beyond the older woman, Elwell's glance rested upon a tall, familiar form; he stood spell-bound, staring in open-mouthed amazement. Could that be Wallace Chase, or was he dreaming? Assuredly this was the sick man he had sent away to die, miraculously restored to health. Yet Elwell had surely read those painful words upon the printed page: "At Capri suddenly, Wallace Chase." What did it mean?

Then all at once the truth dawned on him: it was Wallace's father who had died in Italy; this was Wallace Chase, junior, with his mother leaning on his arm, and Eleanor, his wife, upon the other side. Eleanor's cheeks were pink, and the old-time sparkle he had feared to find forever dulled flashed at him a joyful recognition as all came down the gangway. Though the group was a sombre one, he waved ecstatically as they approached, feasting his eyes upon the sturdy form of Chase, who had regained that bearing which was his in the days when he had been the best all-round athlete in his class.

As Elwell hurried forward through the crowd to meet them, he murmured with keen wonderment: "And I came here to expiate my sins; to do sad penance for the lie upon my conscience! And, after all, it was the truth I told him. Great Heavens! it was the truth!"



AN UNWILLING INTRUSION

By Percy Wilson

IT was a trifle past midnight. Mr. Benjamin Kitsey had spent a quiet but thoroughly enjoyable evening at cards with several masculine friends, and having quit the game a small sum to the good, was making his way to his bachelor lodgings in a pleasantly exhilarated frame of mind. As he stepped briskly along the almost deserted street the echo of his footfall made companionable melody with the jingle of the unearned increment in his pocket, and thus he fell into an abstruse calculation of the length of time this latter would supply him with cigars at the increased value of three for a quarter, and seven a day. He ruminatively laid his head one side and squinted an eye toward the starry firmament—just in the nick of time to observe a brilliant meteor shoot across the sky.

"Ah-h-h!" exclaimed Mr. Kitsey appreciatively, and abandoning his arithmetic stopped to watch it. The abrupt cessation of his footsteps smote the thoroughfare with an intense stillness. Apparently this distressed a wakeful occupant in a house directly across the street, for as Mr. Kitsey turned to scan the heavens for further stellar phenomena he saw a light appear around the edges of a third-story window. The shade was let up, and a feminine head was thrust into the balmy autumnal atmosphere. Possessing an admiration as unlimited as it was impartial, Mr. Kitsey immediately forsook the search for the lesser visual delight, and, albeit unable to determine definitely whether the lady might be seventeen or seventy, for the light behind threw her face into shadow, he gave himself the benefit of the doubt and gallantly waved a hand. "Oh, you angel!" he murmured.

The lady made no response. She seemed, in fact, not to see him. She looked up the street and down the street, but not across. Observing this, Mr. Kitsey stepped to the curb and waved again. Now he caught her attention, and venturing a degree further, he politely removed the cigar from between his lips and wafted her a kiss. Immediately the lady's head went in and the shade came down.

A quizzical expression played over Mr. Kitsey's face. Then affecting to believe that his cigar had been at fault, he viewed it disapprovingly. "I don't blame her," he murmured. "That's a bum stogie. I don't like the taste of it myself." And he threw it away.

The light still remaining in the room, however, he stuck to his post, and shortly was rewarded by noting the shade raised just enough to let a pair of eyes peer out beneath. Immediately falling into the pose which he assumed when he desired to make himself irresistible to the fair sex, he drew forth his handkerchief and proceeded to signal a variety of tender messages from the invaluable compendium known as "The True Lover's Code." In reply the lady thrust out her hand and waved it—violently.

Mr. Kitsey was not dense. He did not need to refer to any code to interpret the gesture as an intimation that he should move on, but flattering himself that he possessed some knowledge of the eccentricities of the sex he lingered nevertheless. Again the lady retired, the light was turned up, then turned out, and a moment later a small square of paper appeared over the edge of the window-sill and floated slowly downward.

"Ha!" exclaimed Mr. Kitsey triumphantly. "They can't get away from me! 'Dearest Kitsey-Kootsey:—Meet me at the old oak!'" He glanced cautiously up and down the street.—"Or the station house," the alternative occurred to him in this action. In no wise deterred, however, by this reminder of the unromantic tendency of the times, he carefully observed the course of the billet-doux, and when it fluttered into the areaway that led beneath the front steps, he crossed the street and followed down after it.

It was readily located, and he was bringing it up to a street lamp for perusal, when upon his eyes reaching the level of the sidewalk he saw coming toward him, less than half a block away, a patrolman. He stopped and stared. "I've seen that done before," he mused, "in moving pictures. They bring them right up out of anywhere."

But it became speedily evident that the present object was no such illusion, and Mr. Kitsey was driven to consider swiftly his limited choice of action. "There's not much use trying to explain things to fellows like that," he cogitated. "They're a terribly thick-headed lot." Glancing behind him, and noting that the lower half of the area doorway was well in shadow, he hastily retreated there.

Mr. Kitsey was fortunate in the present instance in being something under the medium size, for by crouching he was able to get himself pretty well into one corner. But the posture cramped him, and the door having been left insecurely fastened, in his squirming about to obtain greater comfort, it gave way to his pressure and let him gently over on his back into the cellar. With great presence of mind he seized the door and crowded it swiftly but noiselessly shut—not an instant too soon, for immediately thereafter the guardian of the night passed the house.

With an extreme of caution, Mr. Kitsey waited a full minute after

the footsteps had died completely away before venturing to open the door. As he softly turned the knob something whispered to him that his troubles had just begun, for although the knob turned backward or forward with equal ease, it did not release the catch. He ran his hand hastily up and down the door in search of some other latch that might connect it, but there was only the one lock.

When he had spent about fifteen minutes in a fruitless endeavor to coax the knob into an association with the bolt, and had broken both blades of his knife in an attempt at force, he gave up and wiped his perspiring face. With the realization of the inefficacy of his attempts he became philosophical, and, his eyes having by this time grown accustomed to the darkness, he determined to look about for some other means of egress. "I simply must get out of here," he argued. "I ought to be in bed. I'm losing good sleep."

In the rear cellar he discovered a small window that looked into the side yard. It was high up, just below the joists, but by standing on a tub he found that he could take out the sash, while the iron grating was hinged, and held only by a simple bolt. A little further search brought to light a box and an old chair, from which with the tub he constructed one of those pyramids on whose heights the Mikado's equilibrists are wont to display marvelous feats of balance; and having spread over the wall and window-sill an old newspaper for the protection of his clothes, he surveyed the result with considerable satisfaction. "If the old thing works all right," he mused chirklily, "I'll get a paper parasol and a Japanese fan and take it on the circuit. Bills—Oyu Kitsi, direct from Tokyo Royal Theatre."

Very carefully he mounted the shaky column and opened the grating. The aperture was nothing too large, but by slow and cautious squirming he was pulling himself through when he imagined he heard footsteps in the room overhead, and paused to listen. There was no doubt about the sounds. There were other footsteps, too, from somewhere farther in the house, and the ones above began to move hurriedly.

Giving a mighty wriggle and twist, whereby he overturned the pyramid in the cellar with a resounding crash, Mr. Kitsey hauled himself through the window and struggled to his feet. At the same instant a man's leg and a bundle of something hard and knobby came out of the dining-room window immediately over his head, and in his first leap toward liberty Mr. Kitsey's forehead came so sharply and painfully into contact with one of the knobs that without consideration of possible consequences he exclaimed "Ootch!" The sharp enunciation of this magic word completely unsettled the owner of the leg, and letting go the bundle, he made one spring and struck out for the rear gate; while the bundle itself settled over Mr. Kitsey and bore him to the pavement.

A trifle stunned by his fall, and still further stupefied by the sight of a silver dish rolling out of the bundle as he pushed it off him, Mr. Kitsey had risen only as far as hands and knees when a thin man clad in pajamas rushed from the kitchen door excitably flourishing a revolver.

"Aha!" cried this person. "Put up your hands! I've got you. Aha!"

"Aha! yourself," retorted Mr. Kitsey, who could n't well put up his hands without butting out his brains against the pavement. "What do you think I am?" he demanded, getting up and brushing off his clothes. "A burglar?"

Thoroughly taken aback by this unexpected query, the thin man pointed mutely to the bundle of silverware.

"That's him! That's him! That's the villain!" cried a feminine voice; and a lady of uncertain age—though possibly under sixty—hung halfway out the window. There was something sufficiently familiar in her lineaments for Mr. Kitsey to identify them infallibly as those which had been the inception of his present dilemma, and he stared at her wide-eyed in alternating fear of a present disclosure and wonder at his previous nearsightedness.

The thin man's behavior was most strange. "Go back! Go back!" he cried; in his excitement removing the revolver from cover of Mr. Kitsey and waving it under the lady's nose. "Go back to bed, Aunt Martha. This is no place for you."

"Nor for me," thought Mr. Kitsey; albeit he regarded the situation as improved when the lady had gone.

The thin man drew a breath of relief, and meeting Mr. Kitsey's wondering gaze—"A little unsettled here," he explained, still trembling, and tapping his forehead. "Subject to fits." Then immediately realizing to whom he was making the explanation, he abruptly thrust the revolver into Mr. Kitsey's face again.

But by this time Mr. Kitsey had completely recovered his nerve, and having concluded from noting the thin man's handling of the revolver that a shot from it was as likely to result in suicide as in manslaughter, looked him boldly in the eye and desired him to take his pop-gun away.

"Do I look like a jimmy-artist?" he demanded, holding open his coat to display the splendor of his raiment.

"No-o-o," admitted the thin man. "No, you don't. But what are you doing here?" he queried irritably. "Who is the burglar, if you are n't? Where is he?" And he flourished the revolver again.

"What am I doing here?" repeated Mr. Kitsey. "Where is the burglar? Ah!"—tapping the thin man impressively on the chest, "now we are approaching a solution." Fervently enough he hoped

they might be, but although his brain was working with great rapidity he had n't grasped it yet.

Looking wise, and continuing the tapping as a method of gaining time, he shortly germinated an idea. "Did you hear that awful racket in the cellar?" he asked.

The thin man nodded.

"You left the area door unlatched last evening," Mr. Kitsey declared in a tone of reproof.

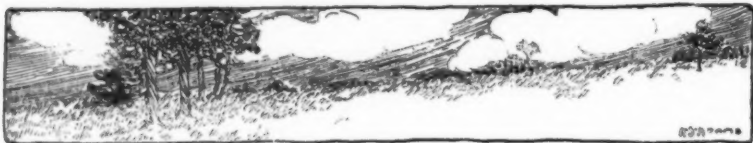
"The lock is out of order," was the faltering admission.

"Exactly. But careless, even so," he chided. "Very careless. Now, I want to show you something." Getting down on his hands and knees facing the cellar window, Mr. Kitsey motioned for the thin man to do likewise.

"A little farther away," he directed, when the thin man was on all fours at his side. "I think he has likely gone, but for protection keep a good hold on your revolver. Now"—when the thin man had placed himself as directed—"look over in that corner." As the thin man bent lower to peer into the darkness, Mr. Kitsey suddenly grasped him by the nether article of his scant apparel and forced him head and shoulders through the window, with the revolver under him; then leaping over the prostrate form sped swiftly down the yard and out the gate.

Within five minutes he was safely in his own room, and starting to disrobe. Ever regardful of his clothing, he was clearing out the pockets of his coat before folding it away, when he drew forth the square note. There were four words on it,—“Mind your own business.”

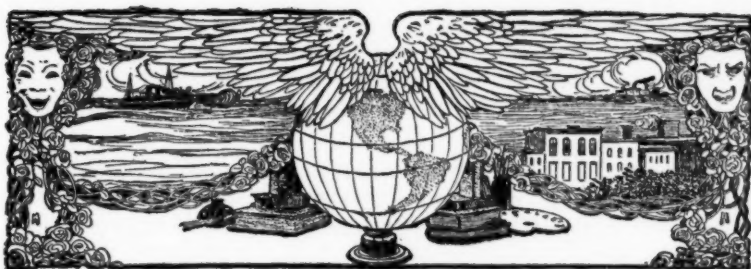
“Say!” exclaimed Mr. Kitsey, sinking down upon the edge of his bed. “Say! That old girl is n't as bug as some people I know. By Heck! that's good advice.” And for a considerable time he sat and pondered it as it had been elucidated to him that very night.



DOUBT

BY JOSEPHINE MORRIS ROWAN

LIKE a gaunt ghost, Doubt stalks within the Thought,
Denying what was substance, leaving nought.



WAYS OF THE HOUR

A DEPARTMENT OF CURRENT COMMENT AND
CRITICISM—SANE, STIMULATING, OPTIMISTIC

THE BIGNESS OF THINGS

SIZE is the criterion that a child can use as well as an agricultural-show jury—and use better than a Ph.D., since Ph.D.'s have, for the most part, only one-third vision. No doubt size *does* go far toward determining the value of some things—ladies' hats and their husbands' salaries, for example—yet it is none the less interesting to read what is said in "My Farm at Edgewood" on this very point:

It is a common mistake to suppose that garden products are good in proportion to their size. . . . Smoothness, roundness, perfect development of all the parts, and delicate flavor, are the true tests.

Horticultural-society magnates would be properly punished in having to eat the monstrosities they honor with their prizes. And I sometimes think, with the Edgewood Farmer, that the disposition to set the mere grossness of a thing above its finer qualities, is a weakness peculiarly American. Am I far wrong?

To the American politician, we seem the greatest people because we have so many votes. The builder and contractor comes to the same conclusion because we want so many town-houses and country-places to contain us. Then there's the circumstance that there is a large balance of trade in our favor—it *is* in our favor, isn't it? At any rate, it's large. Greatest we are in all things, and not least in size. Lafcadio Hearn's marvelous description of New York ("a city walled up to the sky and roaring like the sea") depends for much of its effectiveness on bigness in numbers and money. "In that block on the right there dwell nine thousand souls; the tenants of the edifice facing it pay the annual rent of a million dollars. Seven millions scarcely covered the

cost of those bulks overlooking the square beyond,—and there are miles of such.” The American is a bit proud that his railroads kill more persons annually than other peoples’ railroads; and in Bret Harte’s “How Santa Claus Came to Sandy Bar” the *Sierra Avalanche* remarks, “with pensive local pride,” “An area as large as the State of Massachusetts is now under water.”

You and I have a great deal of “pensive local pride”; and that is as it should be. My complaint is that the pride is in our quantity of things, and their size individually—not in the things themselves. Thus the newspaper editor convinced that the United States is the only place fairly habitable can with a clear conscience print accounts of grafting Governors and itching Congressmen. It pleases him, and he thinks it may please his readers, this thought that, rotten as old Europe is, we are more rotten when we apply ourselves to it.

We have sometimes thought of our universities as strongholds of conservatism. After all, they only reflect the taste of their communities. Much has been said in these last months of the insufficiency of our educational ideals; our colleges have been “muck-raked.” Mr. Flexner, Mr. Birdseye, Professor Babbitt, President Pritchett—one and all they have condemned the lack of coördination between college and university, and of efficiency in both. Why, with larger opportunities than ever, have we lower educational standards? Here again our obsession with the mere bigness of things is the mischief-maker. “Amherst keeps an anxious eye on Williams,” writes one of the critics of our colleges. “Brown is prouder of a larger attendance this year than last; Harvard men point with scorn to the smaller enrolment at Yale.” The registration at our colleges is, to be sure, inflated; but who maintains that the influence of the big college with its big courses is as great to-day, on the individual graduate, as it was when fewer men “worked their way through,” when freshmen worried along somehow without owning motor-cars, and the whole university was no larger than this year’s entering college class?

Our cult of bigness is but an evidence of youth, and not a national weakness. Size certainly does not determine the value of pictures; we have seen historical pieces of vast acreage that no one looked at twice. It is not the standard of literary worth—the “Festus” is not rated as high as some of Keats’s briefest poems; even in nations size is not everything, since little England has bolted India, Ganges and all, and Russian pride went down before jiu jitsu. The size of the grape does not declare the vintage’s dearness. All this is so obvious, why should the mere bigness of things ever have so imposed upon us? Hazlitt speaks somewhere of the “cockneyism of the nineteenth century”; this is the cockneyism of the twentieth.

WARREN BARTON BLAKE

THE THINGS WE CANNOT SEE

A T best, man is a coward. But, even as the worm, he will hit back if he can see what to hit. Yea, though he cannot see what to hit, he will paw the air in a wildly vain endeavor to annihilate the unperceived cause of a plainly perceived pain.

The more a man hits, however, without hitting anything, the more frightened he becomes. We like to get action for our money. We like to know what we're up against. If a man can see what he's up against, he can take his choice between fighting or running, but when he is up against something which he cannot see, he can hope neither to fight effectively nor to choose the proper direction in which to run. He must just stand still and shiver. He is helpless.

It is the real or imaginary foe behind the tree or lurking in the dim shadows ready to spring upon us that raises our hair in apprehension. Real though he may be, our imagination clothes him with superlative formidability. Once we get a look at him, we find him just about like other men, and our trusty six-shooters, or even our fists, are fashioned for and are quite adequate to such commonplace visibilities.

The same is true outside the field of enemies in human form. We do not really stand in awe of the mosquito or the moth or the bedbug. These we can see or at least they let us know approximately where they are so that we can duly swat them. But the germ and the microbe and the parasite and the bacillus and all the rest of that silent host of which the doctors hypothesize in their fairy books—these baffle us, and a real or imaginary encounter with them starts the goose-flesh and sets us to trembling and shaking like cowardly poltroons.

It may be observed that even the redoubtable Falstaff was not braggart enough to claim he had ever vanquished a horde of bacilli. He knew that he could fabricate remarkable man-to-man feats with some degree of plausibility, however slight, but that he could not hope to beguile even the most gullible with tales of valorous deeds against the host invisible of animalcules.

Likewise in the political field. The thief who steals in *propria persona* and makes off gives us comparatively little concern. We are fixed for him. That's what the police force is for. So also the man who commits murder presents a comparatively simple problem, brain storms and unwritten law to the contrary notwithstanding. But just as in the past it was the witch with mysterious, unseen, inscrutable powers who baffled the authorities, so to-day it is the incomprehensible corporation with many heads for parade and no heads for punishment which sets us at complete defiance. Theodore Roosevelt may be at ease with the grizzly bear of the Rockies, the grizzly Spaniard of San Juan,

or the grizzly lion of the Congo; he is at sea with the devious, not to say devilish, complexity of the dark ways and vain tricks of modern financial necromancy.

Judge Lynch of the chivalrous South can make quick work of an offending negro with a disordered brain, but, while equally outraged, he is helpless before an eighteenth-century railroad with a disordered equipment. One cannot see a railroad. One can see a piece of the track, quantities of rolling stock on the sidings, passenger and freight stations, etc., but one cannot see the railroad, the thing itself. One can see a man, but one cannot see a corporation. One can see an officeholder, but one cannot see a political machine.

Of course there are microscopes, telescopes, and other instruments of examination and scrutinization for both long and short range, and both literal and figurative. As sure as there is a game, there is a way to beat it. That's the consolation. That's where the optimist comes in. By some such device, every now and then a new enemy is brought into strong bas relief, whereupon we take aim, bang away, and lo! he, she, or it is laid low. Then it all looks very simple and we wonder why we were so long in finding out what to do.

The reason was that we could see what we were up against.

ELLIS O. JONES

THE SIN ARGUMENT

THE argument is always in order, either in polite or in impolite society, as to whether sin is original or unoriginal, whether it is purely a matter of the individual or of the environment, whether it is hereditary or acquired, whether it is a question of seed or soil, whether it is germ or germane.

It would be a pity if the question were ever settled. So long as it is in a mooted state, fond mothers are relieved of the necessity of being confronted by inexorable science at awkward emergencies. When the black sheep of the family comes along, it is now a simple matter to place all the blame on environment, associations, or at least the father's side of the house, while still clinging to the family tree and hanging all the white sheep tenderly thereon.

Then, to speak subjectively, if the individuals themselves are what the world calls good, they may now modestly accredit it to their own noble struggles with an untoward environment, while if they are what the world calls bad it is very comforting to blame it on some rascally and paretic ancestor who flourished during the period of the Crusades.

In short, the trouble with science is that it burns one's bridges behind one.

PHIL COLLOM

WALNUTS AND WINE



SINGING HIS OWN PRAISES

Hazing at the United States Military Academy, West Point, has in the past ten years been so frequently followed by punishment and otherwise discountenanced that it has practically become a thing of the past. A third of a century ago the modes of hazing were varied, and many of them unique. A certain graduate, who hailed from south of the Mason and Dixon line and from west of the Alleghany Mountains, told this story of his own experience.

He was a tall, raw-boned fellow when he entered the academy as a "plebe," and had been assigned to a room with a bright little chap, with whom he soon became very friendly and confidential. Several weeks after he had entered the academy he received a letter from his good mother, in which she had enclosed a clipping from their county newspaper. The article mentioned the fact that young Mr. — had received an appointment to West Point and had left for that place several days before; that whereas they extended congratulations to the young man, the United States Government was to be much more greatly congratulated upon obtaining as one of its embryo soldiers a man from their community, the son of such a noble sire, whose sire and great-sires had been equally noble, a young man above reproach, of great intellect, and bound to make his mark in any calling he might elect, etc. This article inspired its recipient with pride and pleasure; he found it impossible to refrain from showing it to his roommate, and an hour after having done so was accosted, while going down-stairs, by an upper-classman who had been drilling him and had been very severe. At this meeting the upper-classman, who was about half his size, looked at him solemnly, removed his cap, and said: "Mr. —, I humbly beg your pardon for having been so stern with you. I did not know until a few moments ago what a distinguished and intellectual young man you were. You honor us by becoming one of us."

Walnuts and Wine

The pleased "plebe," never for a moment scenting mischief, grinningly replied: "That's all right, Mr. —; I forgive you."

That evening, while the "plebe" and his roommate were engaged in study, there was a knock at their door, and there entered the upper-classman who had accosted and apologized to the "plebe" on the stairs, he being accompanied by a dozen other upper-classmen. He thus addressed the "plebe": "Mr. —, here are a number of your brother cadets who are desirous of knowing what a particularly distinguished man they have among them. You will therefore kindly read what your newspaper says of you."

The "plebe" was inclined to demur, but the determined manner and steely eye of the little upper-classman compelled obedience; embarrassed, he stumblingly read the whole article, at the conclusion of which the little upper-classman stated that the reader had mumbled in parts, had failed to enunciate distinctly, and required the poor "plebe" to read it again. This having been done, all shook hands with him in an apparently most deferential manner, after which the little upper-classman stated that they would call the next evening augmented by other cadets, and that in the mean time the "plebe" would commit the article to memory and be in readiness to repeat it when they called.

His manner brooked no disobedience; the call was made the next evening, the number of cadets being nearly double that of the previous evening, and he repeated the article, being prompted by the little upper-classman. Before the departure of his visitors he was informed that he would be visited the next evening by a still greater number of cadets, and he was ordered to be prepared to declaim the article depicting his virtues.

The visit was made and the declamation rendered. He was then informed that he would be again visited the following evening, and would prepare himself so as to be able to render the article in song. This visit was made, the room being fairly packed with cadets, and the poor "plebe" was required to stand on a table and howl the article from start to finish, for he had not the faintest understanding of how to sing, or turn a tune. In after years he said that if he had ever had any egotism in his composition it was completely knocked out of him by having to handle that article as he had to handle it.

J. W. Duncan

NATURALLY

"Who was Noah's wife, pa?"

"Joan of Arc, my boy. Now run away."

Clara O'Neill

Walnuts and Wine

THE FRESH AND THE SOPH

By John W. Wayland

A Freshy as green
As ever was seen
Approached the college door,
And into his eyes
Came a glad surprise
At sight of a Sophomore.

"Good luck," quoth he,
"Most surely to me
The fates have kindly sent;
For who can doubt
That I am about
To meet the President?"

With heart all abeat,
Yet scorning retreat,
He passed through the sacred door;
And even though death
Seemed stealing his breath,
Addressed he the Sophomore.

"The President, sir,
You are, I infer,
Of this dispenser of lore;
I'm here, as you see,
To take a degree,"
Said the Fresh to the Sophomore.

With rage quite insane
The Soph clutched his cane
And thumped it half through the floor.
"The President, sir?
You impudent cur!—
Why, I am a Sophomore!"



THE UNDERSTUDY

"Was Maudie sick about it?"
"I should say she was. She threw up her part!"

Clara O'Neill

Walnuts and Wine

WILLING TO TRY

"And so, my friends," the Sunshine Orator went on eloquently, "with all our troubles, all our woes, our cares and little disappointments in life, let us laugh them off. Has your friend, the man who for many years you have trusted as you would your own brother, deceived you? Laugh it off! Has your business that once was prosperous grown dull and sluggish? Laugh it off. Has worry entered in to disturb your peace of mind? Laugh it off. Have you quarrelled with one you love? Laugh it off."

"Say, Mister," interrupted a weather-beaten old man sitting in the front row, "can't ye vary this yere entertainment with jest a few really funny jokes?"

"Jokes?" retorted the Lecturer. "Jokes? Why should I indulge in such frivolity at such a time as this?"

"Wa-al, ye see," returned the old fellow, squirming in his seat, "I got a porous plaster on that tickles me like time, and I thought mebbe with a leetle help I might laugh it off." H. D. G.

HAPPY ADAM

By Charles Houston Goudiss

Whatever trouble Adam had,
No man could make him sore
By saying when he told a joke,
"I've heard that thing before."

ENTER, THE HUSBAND

Lawrence J. Anhalt, business manager for David Warfield, brings in from the road the story of the manager of a thrilling melodrama, in one scene of which a husband enters one door an instant after an admirer of his wife has made his exit from another. During a run of a week in one city the manager noticed that one man, obviously from the country, went in every night. Finally he remarked to the man that he must enjoy the performance.

"Tolerably so," replied the playgoer, "but some night that husband is going to catch that other feller, and I want to be on hand to see what happens." J. Maxwell Beers

CONCISE SHORT STORY

Angelina Smith loved Edwin Jones.

Edwin Jones was poor.

Angelina Smith is Mrs. Robinson.

La Touche Hancock

Walnuts and Wine

BUT THE OTHERS DID

There may be a good reason why some jokes are funnier when there is a minister around.

At a certain boarding-house where there was a minister, there was also a little boy, who with his mother occupied the front room upstairs.

As they all sat down to dinner one evening after a dreary day of rain, the landlady asked the boy, "Well, Willie, what have you been doing all afternoon?"

"I've been running ribbons in mother's underwear," replied Willie, with naïve enthusiasm.

And the minister did not smile.

Ellis O. Jones

THE NEW WRITING

Advice to an ambitious writer, from a Literary Bureau: "Let your story always have contained in it the element of love, but always treat it in a strikingly original way. The old forms have gone out."

SAMPLE

Perkins listened.

Yes, there on the stairs he heard the steps of a woman. He knew at once it was his wash-woman.

The thought came to him, like a flash of inspiration, that he must love her. He had loved every other kind. Only this way remained open.

A new emotion—an entirely new vein—was his. He lost no time.

She deposited her bundle on the floor, puffing and blowing. He began counting out the change. He could feel the warm blood mounting to his cheeks.

"Mrs. Murphy," he said at last, facing her with supreme resolution, "do not be startled, I beg of you. But in the deep of your eyes I discern something—what shall I call it?—a soul-wave, that is in tune with mine. What is your first name?"

"Bridget, sur."

"It does not matter. Bridget, listen to me. I love you, love you with an absorbing, compelling love. Will you be mine? In spite of husband, friends, local traditions—everything—will you be mine? It is inevitable that it should be. Environment is nothing. We are imprisoned in two weak bodies, but as we gaze into each other's eyes we know at last that we two have met in an eternal embrace? Do you understand? Only say that you understand."

Bridget Murphy gazed at him an instant in wild surprise, with her hands on her hips. Then with a cry of delight she sank into his arms.

"Sure, Oi've met me own at lasht!" she murmured. "Home, husband, and frinds is nothin' to me now."

Then the struggle began.

Thomas L. Masson

Walnuts and Wine

A TEMPERANCE QUESTION

By W. J. Lampton

H	A	T	S
a	f	h	t
v	t	a	a
e	e	t	n
	r		d
y		a	
o	l		a
u	i	m	s
	q	a	
e	u	n	s
v	o		t
e	r	d	r
r	s	o	a
		e	i
o	a	s	g
b	n		h
s	d	n	t
e		o	
r	w	t	a
v	i		s
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SAME THING

"So he praised my singing?"

"Yes, he said it was heavenly."

"Really?"

"Well, something like that. He said it was unearthly."

Clara O'Neill



A Severe Test for the Memory

Amusing for all
but exceedingly
useful for liars

MACKLIN, the celebrated actor, one evening made "The Cultivation of the Memory" the subject of a lecture, during which he said that to such perfection had he brought his own, that he could learn anything by rote on once hearing it. Foote, another actor, was present, and handed up the following sentences, desiring that Macklin would read them once and repeat them from memory :

"So she went into the garden to cut a cabbage-leaf, to make an apple-pie; and at the same time a great she-bear, coming up the street, pops its head into the shop. 'What! No Pears Soap?' So he died, and she very imprudently married the barber; and there were present the Picinnies, and the Joblilies, and the Garcelies, and the Grand Pan-jandrum himself, with the little round button at top; and they all fell to playing the game of catch as catch can, till the gunpowder ran out at the heels of their boots."

It is needless to say that Foote had the laugh of old Macklin, and that Pears' Soap is matchless for the Complexion

OF ALL SCENTED SOAPS PEARS' OTTO OF ROSE IS THE BEST.

"All rights secured."

In writing to advertisers, kindly mention LIPPINCOTT'S.

Walnuts and Wine

She who marries her puppy love is likely to lead him a dog's life.

Walter Pulitzer

A TRUE STORY FROM THE LECTURE PLATFORM

The chairman of the lecture committee was a very absent-minded man, and when he had reached that portion of his introduction of the Eminent Lecturer wherein it was fitting that he should mention the name of the honored visitor he forgot it completely, and in the hope that it would return unto him, began to spar for time:

"When I say that it is a household word all over this broad land of ours, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the Penobscot to the Gulf, I make no mistake. When I say that it is the name of one of the Princes of Literature, I but do its honored bearer scant justice. When I say that in oratory the mere mention of it calls to our minds the days of Demosthenes, I but speak the simple truth."

Still the name did not come.

"And to think that *he* is with us here to-night! To think that I should be privileged to stand upon this platform *here*, in *this* town, with—ah—with *him*!"

Still no glimmer of the Immortal Name.

"I can hardly believe it, and yet my eyes tell me that *he* is here. My very being echoes to his honored name. My spirit rejoices that one like this should pause in the midst of his inspired labors to be our guest to-night."

Identity of gentleman still elusive.

"My friends, in a life-time of happiness, and I may say of honor, among you, I have known no happiness, attained no *no*! I will not speak the name, for is it not graven in letters of golden fire on all our hearts? It is. And so, let me say to you simply, but in all sincerity, that *he* is here, that we are privileged to look upon him, to hear his voice, to drink in the wisdom of his utterances and the splendor of his eloquence."

Sits down amid uproarious applause.

John Kendrick Bangs

THE AMIABLE OYSTER

By Robert T. Hardy

Your oyster is a modest chap,

And even-tempered, too;

And yet it cannot be denied

He oft gets in a stew!

Walnuts and Wine



Pineapple
Ice Cream

Served With

NABISCO
SUGAR WAFERS

The one dessert confection equally appropriate to serve with ice cream or ices, fruits, beverages, desserts. At any time—at any place—to any person.

In ten cent tins

Also in twenty-five cent tins.

NATIONAL BISCUIT COMPANY

In writing to advertisers, kindly mention LIPPINCOTT'S.

Walnuts and Wine

TOO FAST FOR HIM

At the University of Missouri is the first working school of journalism in the world. As practical laboratory work, a daily paper with telegraph reports is issued. Walter Williams, its dean, tells of the vicissitudes he encounters in turning laymen into journalists. A student was sent in haste to cover a railroad wreck at a town a few miles away.

It was almost time for the daily to go to press, and still no word had been received from the young man on the assignment. In desperation Dean Williams telegraphed, asking why the story was not forthcoming. The reply was:

Too much excitement. Wait till things quiet down.

Homer Croy

THE PIKER

Piker—Literally, a bluffer, a man who has not the money to buy, but pretends he has.—*AUTOIST'S DICTIONARY.*

By Minna Irving

He viewed a racy runabout,
Approval in his eye,
And talked of tires and sparking-plugs,
And gear both low and high.
The salesmen waited on his steps,
And hastened at his beck,
And showed the beauties of the cars,
With visions of a check.

He much admired a limousine,
And when he climbed inside,
The flattered auto-men at once
Invited him to ride.
Next day, alas! comparing notes,
It added to their cares
To feel that they had entertained
A piker unawares.

A VITAL QUESTION

Little Eugene, aged three, is the baby of the family. One night, after having had his supper and being put to bed, he propounded to his mother the question: "Mamma, who got my supper for me when you was little?"

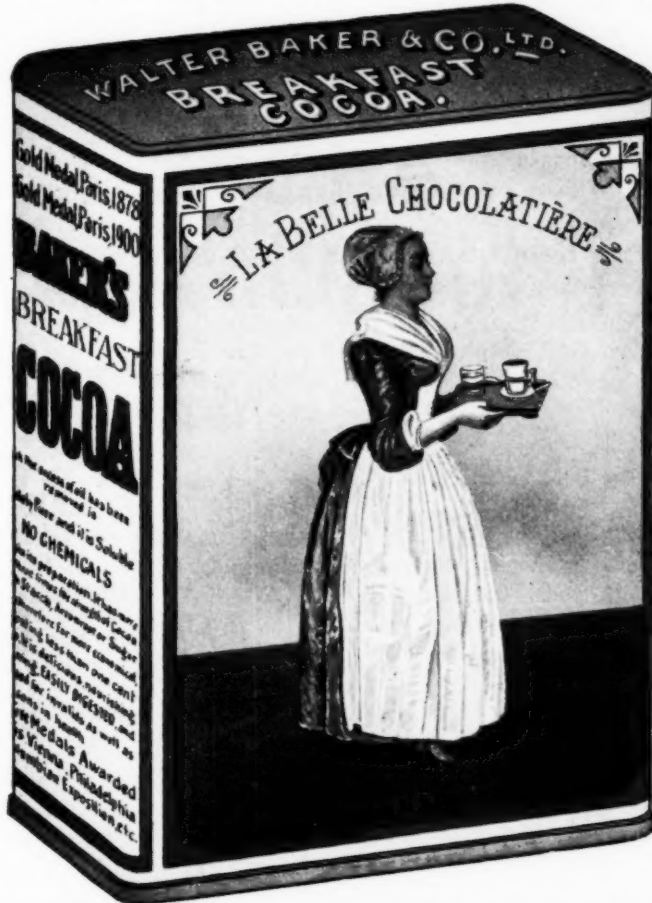
Berthel Holmes

Walnuts and Wine

THE GENUINE
BAKER'S BREAKFAST COCOA

EIGHT OUNCES—PURE COCOA

Note the trade-mark and lettering on the can



52 HIGHEST AWARDS IN EUROPE AND AMERICA

A new and handsomely illustrated recipe book containing chocolate and cocoa recipes by Miss Parloa, and forty new recipes for home-made candies by Mrs. Janet McKenzie Hill, will be sent free by mail to any address

WALTER BAKER & CO. Ltd.
Established 1780 DORCHESTER, MASS.

In writing to advertisers, kindly mention LIPPINCOTT'S.

Walnuts and Wine

THE REAL GOVERNOR

While Governor Willson of Kentucky was house-bound last winter, owing to a strained tendon in his leg, he was attended by "Jim," who had been general factotum to many Governors, and who was a source of much fun among State House attachés.

The lame leg caused the Governor to move his office temporarily to the mansion, where he received many delegations.

On one occasion Mrs. Willson had waited luncheon for thirty minutes, and she told His Excellency that he must come down and eat with her.

"My dear," said Mr. Willson, "just as soon as I see that delegation of men down-stairs I'll be with you."

Mrs. Willson was determined, and said: "Jim, you go down and tell them to wait."

"Jim," frowned the Governor, as that worthy started off to obey the mistress of the mansion—"Jim, you know who is Governor, don't you?"

"Yas, sir," grinned Jim, with seeming innocence, "yas, sir. I'll go down and tell the gemmen to wait sir."

Ella Hutchinson Ellwanger

ONE OR THE OTHER

Little Lola was sitting on her grandfather's knee one day, and, after looking at him for some time, she said: "Gwanpa, was 'oo in ze ark?"

"Certainly not, my dear," replied the astonished old gentleman.

"Zen," continued the small inquisitor, "why was n't 'oo ddownded?"

E. J. Timmons

NEEDED SCRATCHING

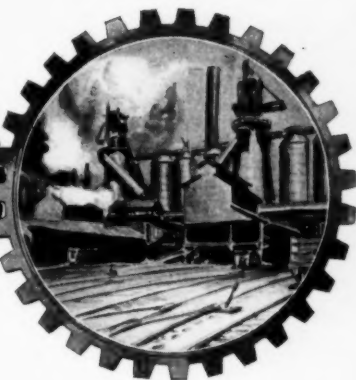
They were having trouble in getting a jury to try a case in a County Court in North Carolina recently. There had been a good deal of feeling aroused, and no one seemed particularly anxious to put himself on record for either side. One man hesitated a long time about stating the grounds on which he based his claim of exemption. Finally he said:

"Well, your honor, the truth of the matter is, I have the itch!"

"Scratch him off, Mr. Clerk, scratch him off," instantly replied the judge.

M. Winans

Walnuts and Wine



The Multiplication of Power

There is no higher efficiency in the world than that of the American business man.

The multiplication of *power* in a business man—if he has the ability within him—depends upon the *increased number* of people whom he can, *by personal contact*, interest in his purposes.

He does this by telephone, and the multiplication of *the telephone's* usefulness depends on the *increased number* of persons whom he can reach.

In 1890 the Bell System had 200,000 subscribers' telephones in use. As late as 1899—ten years ago—it had only 500,000.

To-day it has 4,400,000—one for every twenty persons in this country—and is increasing at the rate of 500,000 a year.

The Bell Long Distance Telephone means as much to the home as it does to the office. It is the most marvelous convenience of modern times—if not all time—added to home life.

The American Telephone and Telegraph Company
And Associated Companies

Every Bell Telephone Is a Long Distance Station

Has the vast development of industries since 1890—the greatest period of advance in the world's history—*when America has advanced faster than all the rest of the world*, been the force that has built up this great, unified, efficient telephone service; or

Has the increased ability of the American business man to bring people to him from every locality, far and near, *over the Bell Telephone System*, been the cause of the multiplication of his power and his principality?

Whichever the cause and whichever the effect, the advancement of one is inseparably linked with the advancement of the other.

The business man's Bell Telephone, with its long distance and emergency advantages, is his most precious asset next to his capital itself.

In writing to advertisers, kindly mention LIPPINCOTT'S.

Walnuts and Wine

THE NEW EDUCATION

A member of a school board was visiting a public school not long ago when he encountered a small boy in the hall.

"What are you studying, my boy?" the visitor asked.

"Arithmetic and geography," answered the boy.

"And what are you learning in arithmetic?"

The boy thought for a minute, then he replied: "Guzinta."

"Guzinta?" said the surprised official. "What's that?"

"Why, don't you know?" said the boy. "Two guzinta four, three guzinta six, four guzinta eight, five guzinta ten."

Antoinette B. Hervey

A HEART-BREAKING JOB

"What's making Swubbs look so wretchedly careworn the last few weeks?"

"Oh, he won a dollar prize in a joke contest three months since, and he's trying to incubate another side-splitter."

Frederick Moxon

STRICTLY BUSINESS

"Who presented the count to you?" asked the privileged friend.

"No one," answered the heiress. "I bought him."

E. J. Timmons

EDITORIAL MATTER

By Harriet Bunker Austin

"A short contribution has come in to-day,"

The editor said, looking solemn.

"Though many quite similar cumber our space,

I think I will give it a column.

"'T would be very rude to reject it 'with thanks,'

Nor have I the heart to return it;

If I threw it away you would call me a brute,

And it would be cruel to burn it.

"The donor affirms it's exceedingly fine,

And I have n't a doubt that it may be,

For the article mentioned was sent by my wife,

And it's only another new baby."

Walnuts and Wine



Gillette Safety Razor

SLIP a Gillette Safety Razor, Pocket Edition, into your vacation grip.

You'll find it the most useful single article in your whole outfit. The Gillette has solved the shaving problem for summer, winter and all the time.

Whether at the mountains or seashore, hotel or cottage, on the trip or in camp, you can always be sure of a clean, satisfying shave with the Gillette at hand.

The time to buy a Gillette is now.

It pays for itself in three months and it lasts a lifetime.

The Gillette, illustrated herewith (actual size), is so compact that it can be carried in the pocket or slipped in the side of a traveling bag. It comes in gold, silver or gun metal—with handle and blade box to match. *The blades are fine.*

Prices, \$5.00 to \$7.50. For sale everywhere.

You should know Gillette Shaving Brush—bristles gripped in hard rubber; and Gillette Shaving Stick—a soap worthy of the Gillette Safety Razor.

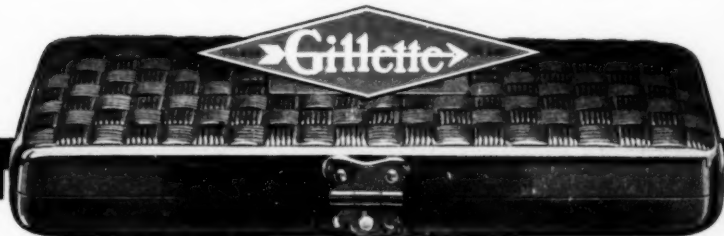
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Walnuts and Wine

PESSIMIST AND OPTIMIST CONTRASTED

The pessimist kills a wasp right off. The optimist waits until it stings him.

The pessimist raps the cow over the back with the milk stool the first time she kicks. The optimist waits until she spills the milk.

The pessimist condemns the book-agent the moment he enters his home. The optimist waits until he has sold him the book.

William J. Burtscher

THIS CAME FROM NEW YORK

A New Yorker, dining a Philadelphia friend, desired to show him all the delicacies of the season. One dish in particular the Philadelphian exclaimed over in delight.

"That is made of snails," said his New York host. "Don't you have snails in Philadelphia?"

"Oh, yes," responded the Philadelphian; "but we can't catch the pesky things."

Edna Valentine Trapnell

JUST IT

By Howard H. Farmer

"Ah, Pat, you've been forgetting me,"

Said Molly Flynn, in tears.

"It's right ye are," said Pat; "I been
For getting ye for years."

GRATITUDE

Some plays "take" and some don't, and the fact that they do or do not is not always a criterion of their merit. This season an excellent play, with a very good and well-known actor in the star rôle, failed utterly—night after night the curtain rose on an all but empty house.

One evening, just as he was about to enter the theatre, the leading man was approached by a ragged beggar, and permitted himself to be "touched" for a quarter.

"A thousand thanks," the beggar said, evincing a rather surprising knowledge of English, as he pocketed the coin. "To you this does not mean much—to me it is half the world, and I am willing to show my appreciation. If you will give me a pass, I will come in and see your show!"

Emmett Campbell Hall

Walnuts and Wine

MENNEN'S

BORATED TALCUM TOILET POWDER



"BABY'S BEST FRIEND"

and Mamma's greatest comfort. Mennen's relieves and prevents Prickly Heat, Chafing and Sunburn. For your protection the genuine is put up in non-refillable boxes—the "Box that Lox," with Mennen's face on top. Guaranteed by the Gerhard Mennen Chemical Co., under the Food and Drugs Act, June 30, 1906, Serial No. 1542. Sold everywhere or by mail 25 cents—Sample free.

Try Mennen's Violet (Borated) Talcum Toilet Powder—It has the scent of Fresh-cut Parma Violets—Sample Free.

You use the toilet powder and throw away the box. Don't throw away money on cheap powder in a pretty box that you'll have to throw away.

The woman who buys Mennen's for toilet use or any other purpose may rest assured that she is getting the purest and most perfect powder that chemical knowledge can originate or skill manufacture.

Mennen's Borated Skin Soap (blue wrapper), specially prepared for the nursery. No samples. } Sold only
Mennen's Sen Yang Toilet Powder, Oriental odor. No samples. } at Stores.

Sent free, for 2 cent stamp to pay postage, one set of Mennen's Bridge Whist Tallies, enough for six tables.

GERHARD MENNEN CO., Newark, N. J.

In writing to advertisers, kindly mention LIPPINCOTT'S.

Walnuts and Wine

THOROUGHLY BUSINESSLIKE

Lord Greenfield, being asked to buy something by a smart young matron who kept a table at a Ladies' Fair, said that he wanted what was not for sale, a lock of her hair. Whereupon she promptly cut off the coveted curl and handed it to him, naming the price—a hundred dollars. Later the purchaser was showing his trophy to a little circle of friends.

"She rather had you there," laughed one benedict. "To my certain knowledge, she only paid three dollars for the entire bunch."

W. Carey Wonderly

AS TO LINCOLN

Just before the celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln a teacher in one of the lower grades of a Boston school told all of the boys and girls in her room to write a little essay about Lincoln. One boy of a dozen years handed in the following:

Abraham Lincoln was born on a bright summer day, the 12th of February, 1899. He was born in a log cabin he had helped his father to build.

J. L. H.

MORE EXCLUSIVE IN PHILADELPHIA

The story is told of an elderly woman, a member of the "inner circle" of Philadelphia society, who was much affected by news of the death of a man of social aspirations which had not, it is sad to relate, been aided by his well-known benevolence.

"Mr. Blank was in many respects an admirable character," said the old lady, "and it was a real pity that his lowly origin made impossible our recognition of him. Poor, dear, vulgar creature! We could not know him in Philadelphia, but we shall meet him in Heaven!"

Edwin Tarrisse

MISUNDERSTOOD

Spinster: "I wish the Lord had made me a man."

Smart nephew: "Perhaps he has, only you have n't found him yet."

Neva Hudson

JUST THE SAME

Platonic Affection is the name Love assumes when travelling incognito.

Clara O'Neill

Business Stationery

ISN'T IT STRANGE how many bond papers have been born "old"? Just because of the standard of grade set by

Old Hampshire Bond

we now find offered by both maker and printer—"Old *This* Bond," "Old *That* Bond," "Old *Someother* Bond" and many of the titles sound like or suggest HAMPSHIRE.

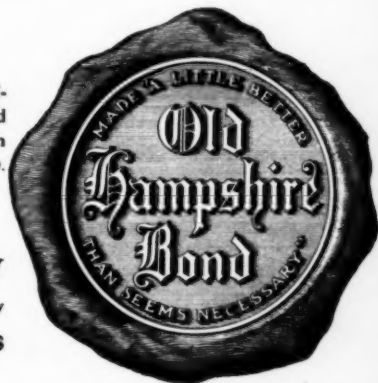
You know why all this is done and will act accordingly.

Buy the real standard to get the best and that of the best repute.

Let us send you the OLD HAMPSHIRE BOND Book of Specimens. It contains suggestive specimens of letterheads and other business forms, printed, lithographed and engraved on the white and fourteen colors of OLD HAMPSHIRE BOND. Write for it on your present letterhead.

Hampshire Paper Company

The only paper makers in the world making bond paper exclusively
South Hadley Falls, Massachusetts



Walnuts and Wine

THE IRRITABLE DINER

Gentleman: "You don't mean to say you call this flavorless stuff oxtail soup, waiter?"

Waiter: "Yessir."

Gentleman: "Then take it out and let the ox dip his tail in it two or three more times."

William Gibb

PRISCILLA'S CURL

By G. B. Duffield

"T was small, it's true, but very fair,
A dainty, gleaming, silky snare
Which some blest wandering breath of air
Brushed o'er my cheek, and then and there,
With cheeks aglow and thoughts awirl,
I wondered if I'd really dare—

Priscilla's curl!

I wondered, too, if she would care,
And, wondering, leaned above her chair,
Pressed to my lips the wisp of hair.
She rose and left me standing there—
With cheeks aglow and thoughts awirl,
For in my hand remained

Priscilla's curl!

A KEEN LAD

"I had always heard that New Englanders were 'smart,'" a young physician who has "graduated" from a village practice remarked the other day, "but I hardly thought it developed at such an early age."

He smiled reminiscently, then continued:

"Just after I settled in Dobbs Corners a twelve-year-old boy called on me one evening.

" 'Say, Doc, I guess I got measles,' he remarked, 'but nobody knows it 'cept the folks at home, an' they ain't the kind that talks, if there's any good reason to keep quiet.'"

"I was puzzled, and I suppose I looked it.

" 'Aw, get wise, Doc,' my small visitor suggested. 'What will you give me to go to school an' spread it among all the kids in the village?'"

Emmett Campbell Hall

Walnuts and Wine



Here Are Two Packages We Want to Send You Free to Use on Your Floors

TEST, at our expense, this bottle of Johnson's Kleen-Floor—the greatest preparation ever invented for keeping in condition all kinds of wood floors, stairs, etc. Every woman is delighted to know there is such a preparation.

All you have to do is to dampen a cloth with the Kleen-Floor and rub over the floor—it removes instantly all discolorations, stains, water-spots, etc., without injury to the finish.

Johnson's Kleen-Floor *rejuvenates* the finish—bringing back its original beauty. It will greatly improve the appearance of all floors, whether finished with shellac, varnish, or wax. Best of all, it's quickly used—two hours' time sufficient to thoroughly clean the floor, have it waxed, and the rugs back in place.

**We Want to Send You FREE a Bottle of KLEEN-FLOOR
and Package of Wax to Be Used After Kleen-Floor Has
Been Applied**

This gives your floors that soft, lustrous, subdued polish which does not catch the dust like highly varnished surfaces, or show heel-marks or scratches. Once you've tried Johnson's KLEEN-FLOOR you'll wonder how you ever got along without it. It's the finest preparation in the world for preparing floors for a new finish, and keeping them always in perfect condition. All we ask is that you use it once—we are sure you'll want it in your home all the time. That's why we want to send you both packages FREE. Be good enough to send us 10 cents to partially pay postage, and shipment will be made immediately. Use coupon in answering.

S. C. Johnson & Son
Racine, Wis.

"Wood Finishing Authorities"

S. C. Johnson & Son, Racine, Wis.
I accept your offer and enclose 10 cents to partially pay postage and pack-
ing on one sample Bottle of Johnson's KLEEN-FLOOR and a Sam-
ple of Johnson's Prepared Wax. Also send me copy of your free
Illustrated Booklet, Edition No. 1-C-8, on Home Beautifying.
Name
Address

In writing to advertisers, kindly mention LIPPINCOTT'S.

Walnuts and Wine

What is more tragic than to forget on "the morning after" that convincing excuse you gave the night before?

Walter Pulitzer.

A DECLINED CALL

"I guess I'll not answer that letter," said Swellhead, the lecturer.

"Why not?" asked his wife.

"You read it and see."

And Mrs. Swellhead read:

DEAR SIR:

Our club is so small and our income is so small that we are unable to secure the best talent. Will you kindly let us know what you would come to us for?

J. L. H.

A HAND-ME-DOWN

A well known advertising expert, responding to the toast "Sartorial Progress" at the banquet of the recent convention of the Tailors' National Association, spoke somewhat as follows:

"I am glad that you clothiers who advertise nowadays print pictures of men's and boys' fashions. Thus you smarten up the country and tend to abolish the dreadful custom of cutting down dad's suit to boy's size. I remember how in the distant past my little brother rushed whimpering into the sitting-room one night.

"What's the trouble?" I asked sympathetically.

"Oh," he mourned, 'Pa's had his beard shaved off, and now I guess I've got to wear those old red whiskers!'"

Justen Tyme

A NARROW-MINDED LAWYER

Ethel, the youngest of a large number of girls in a certain Philadelphia family, recently entered upon the duties of amanuensis to a Walnut Street lawyer.

"How do you like your employer, Ethel?" the young woman was asked upon her return home that night.

"Oh, he's very nice," said Ethel, with faint praise, "but awfully narrow-minded."

"In what way?"

"He seems to have the idea that words can only be spelled his way."

Edwin Tarrissac

Walnuts and Wine

LIQUEUR PÈRES CHARTREUX

GREEN AND YELLOW

The original and genuine Chartreuse has always been and still is made by the Carthusian Monks (Pères Chartreux), who, since their expulsion from France, have been located at Taragona, Spain; and, although the old labels and insignia originated by the Monks have been adjudged by the Federal Courts of this country to be still the exclusive property of the Monks, their world-renowned product is nowadays known as "Liqueur Pères Chartreux."

At first-class Wine Merchants, Grocers, Hotels, Cafés,
Bätjer & Co., 45 Broadway, New York, N. Y.,
Sole Agents for United States.



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Presently screams of anguish from baby sent the distracted parent flying to the sand lot. "For goodness' sake, Tommy, what has happened to the baby?" said she, trying to soothe the wailing infant.

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"Thomas," said his mother severely, "you are telling everybody that when you and papa went fishing the other day, you caught a fish, a big fish! Now, Thomas, you know better."

"W-e-ll," replied the three-year-old, digging his toe into the carpet meditatively, "pr-r-aps I did n't, but—I—*fought* I did."

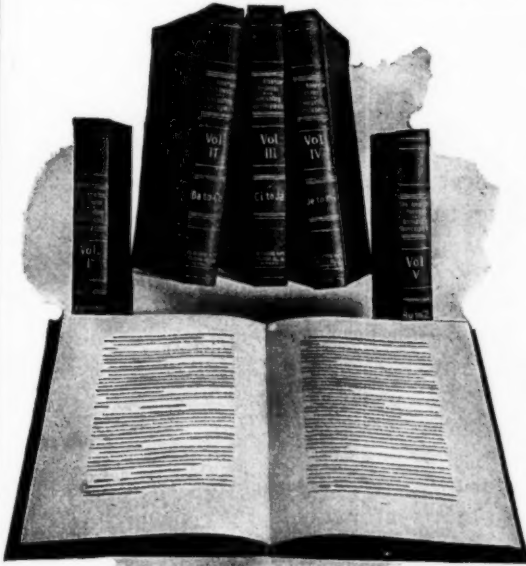
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I really cannot tell.
Let's see; I went to bed one night
Not feeling very well;

Now I'm awake—that's one thing sure—
And would be pleased to know
If I've been ill or overslept
An extra hour or so?

If I've been ill, of course it's right
For me to be in bed;
But if I've only slept too long,
It's laziness, instead!

Is it to-morrow or to-day?
Or only afternoon?
Oh, some one, p-l-e-a-s-e relieve my mind,
Or I'll be crazy soon!

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One evening there was a dance in honor of the birthday of one of the young ladies, and it was with considerable difficulty that the backward cousin was induced to come "down-stairs" and mingle with the gay company there assembled.

About ten o'clock a certain young lady, observing that the mountaineer had taken no part in the dancing, said:

"Mr. Cummins, are n't you going to dance with me?"

After an embarrassed pause, the visitor said: "I will, if you'll excuse me for a few minutes, so that I can get about six drinks."

"Heavens!" exclaimed the girl, dumfounded by this extraordinary condition thus imposed.

"I beg your pardon," returned the mountaineer, aghast at the effect he had produced, "but the truth is that I never have any confidence in my dancing until I've had five or six whiskies."

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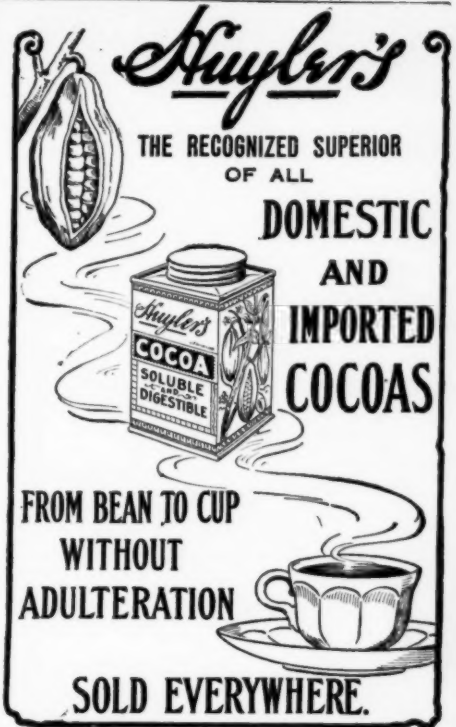
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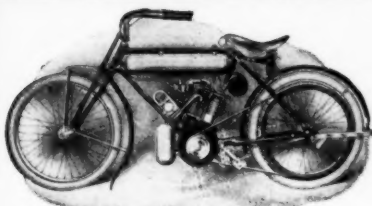
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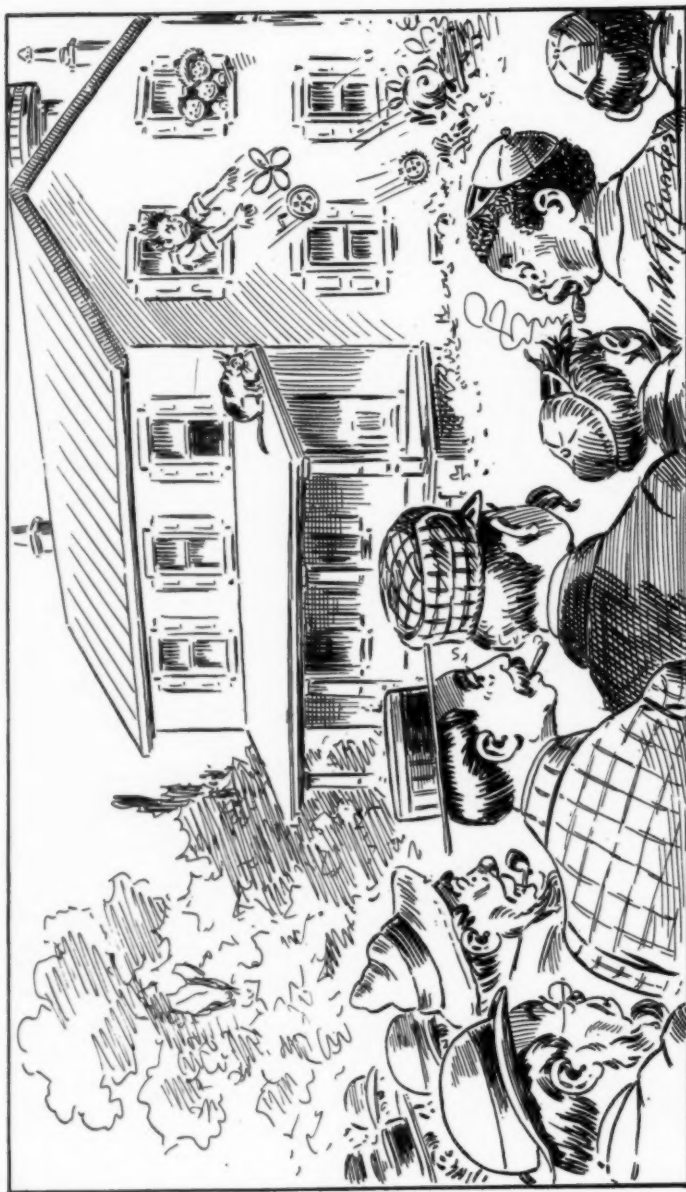
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